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Uplands, Hants.



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THE
NAVAL SURGEON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“CAVENDISH,” “THE FLYING DUTCHMAN,”
“PAUL PERIWINKLE,” &c. &c.

(W. T. Howle)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE NAVAL SURGEON.

CHAPTER I.

“There beat no braver heart than thine, young gallant Howard.”

CHILDE HAROLD.

As the captain's gig approached, they beheld, in the person of their new captain, a young man of three-and-twenty, with fair light hair, and a laughing, good-natured sort of face, tall and well made in figure, and somewhat coxcombical in his dress.

“A good-looking chap, anyhow,” exclaimed some of the younger men.

“ He won’t do ! he won’t do ! ” cried two or three of the old veterans.

“ Why not ? ” demanded a mizen-topman.

“ He’s too much of my mammy about him,” said the captain of the forecastle.

“ He’ll never be fond enough of the cat to keep such blackguards as you in order,” interrupted the boatswain’s mate ; “ and then the good men ’ll have to do all the work of the ship.”

While this important point was in full debate, the boatswain gave a second pipe, and Captain Howard, mounting up the side, motioned to his hat with the point of his scabbard, and stood upon the quarter-deck of the *Epaminondas*—a goodly fellow, something not far short of six feet high.

“ Mr. Gibbon of the *Epaminondas*, I presume,” said he, advancing to the first lieutenant, and speaking in a frank open voice, that at once confirmed every prepossession in his favour.

Gibbon bowed in assent, and his superior, waving his hand towards himself, went on to say:

“ Captain Howard comes on board, that his commission may be read for your ship. Turn the hands up to divisions, and while t hey’re mustering, you can show me round the decks.”

This was delivered with the quickness of a man who knew there was something *in* his head as well as under it; and before Gibbon could reply, Captain Howard had descended to the main deck; all, therefore, that the first lieutenant could do, was to give the necessary orders for the muster by divisions, and follow him.

“ Good ship—fine order, Mr. Gibbon—does you credit,” quoth the captain, striding along. “ Long four-and-twenties, I see—as fine a frigate gun as any in the service—gun after my own heart—aha! my jolly fellows,” slapping one of them familiarly on the breech, “ we’ll see soon if

we can't teach you the art of speaking French, or at least of speaking at them. Are the Epaminondases good shots, Mr. Gibbon?"

"Excellent, sir."

"Glad of it—can do nothing in action without it—will keep them up to the mark—gallant officer Captain Rustone—happy to take a ship at such hands—pity, on your passage home, he didn't fall in with a dashing Frenchman"

"Ah, sir, if he had, it would have been a happy day for us all."

"Come yet, Mr. Gibbon, come yet. Well, this is enough of your main-deck—does you great credit, sir—clean—efficient—great virtues in a man-of-war. Now for your lower deck—good, good, very good—all in keeping. Now, then, for my cabin, and let me see what my steward has done for me—what's that?"

"Captain Rustone's after cabin-carpet, which, being cut to the size of the ship, he thought

you might like to take at a valuation; but your steward has laid down a new one, and rolled the other up here. There were a few fixtures that he left at a valuation also."

"Very good. Steward!"

"Sir!"

"Let Captain Rustone's servants be paid their own price for whatever articles their master left behind, and let them be presented to the doctor, with my compliments, for the use of my people in the sick-bay."

"The doctor begs to return you many thanks for all you can't use yourself, sir," replied Caustic, with his peculiar emphasis, and who, as is the custom at divisions, had been following his two seniors round the ship.

"What, doctor!" said Captain Howard, turning round and smiling, "are you there? I hear you're a wag in your way, sir—a wag in your way."

"No, Captain Howard, not so," returned

Caustic ; “ only very much in the way of a wag.”

The captain, on hearing this, started as if some one had stuck a pin in his leg, and looked hard at the doctor, who merely, however, thrust his hands in his breeches pockets, and, hanging his head on one side, walked to the opposite port, while the other two went into the after-cabin.

Here Gibbon felt the renewal of all his curiosity, touching the mystic robes in the corner ; and the captain, seeing how eagerly his looks were directed towards them, advanced to the small table, and, with the seriousness of a Socrates and the devotion of a monk, raised one of the gloves to his lips, and then replaced it.

By this time Caustic had followed them, and, on seeing this act of worship, thrust his elbow into Gibbon’s side, with a degree of force that brought on the most cachinnatory inclinations in his senior’s facial muscles ; who, to avoid the

high crime of laughing at his captain, was fain, like a great big schoolboy, to thrust his thumb in his mouth, and bite it most severely. After contemplating the dress very soberly for a few minutes, Captain Howard at last condescended to turn round and remark—

“ Mr. Gibbon, I am rather Catholic in my notions, and always make a point of taking with me to sea these reminiscences of my tutelar angel ; so that morning and evening I may pay my orisons to the shrine of the Lady Mary.”

“ O it's Mary is it, and not Helen !” whispered Caustic to Gibbon ; then aloud, “ Talking of Catholics, Captain Howard, there is no creed so Catholic as that of love—the whole world are included among its communicants, while its saints are numberless as sands upon the shore.”

“ Doctor,” said the young captain, “ you discourse most eloquent music upon the subject.

—most feelingly—a very Cupid ! a very Cupid ! I wonder that I never saw the likeness before. Cupid, I'm very sorry that any of your votaries should be sick, but please to make me your report."

Now if there was one name more than another which Caustic would have disliked, it was that one on which the captain had stumbled. In the first place, extreme nearsight had almost rendered him blind, of which he was so tetchy as not to wear even an eyeglass ;—while in his dress he displayed all the carelessness of a man of genius ; his face was most horribly seamed with the smallpox ; his gait was as eccentric as his character ; and he pretended an utter insensibility to the charms of love. To call him, therefore, by the name of Cupid, sensitively alive as he was to this misnomer, was about as ticklish a joke as could be put upon him, and he felt it accordingly. For a moment he looked at his merry captain as

if he could have said daggers, and he was never known to be at a loss for these when inclined to use them. Apparently, however, he changed his intention, and drawing out his sick-list book and pencil-case, he coolly replied,

“Certainly, sir, though there has been one addition since it was last written out, which I will, with your leave, append.”

Accordingly he wrote down at the bottom of the list, “The Honourable Francis J. D. C. Howard; diagnosis, affection of the heart, weakness of the head, wandering of speech.” Having written this, which scarcely another surgeon in the navy would have dared to do, much less have carried through, Caustic gave it to his superior, and then thrusting his hands in his pockets, watched, with his head hanging on one side, the result on his commander’s features.

Not the slightest movement, however, betrayed his emotion, if any there were; and

having carefully gone over the whole, he inquired,

“ Pray, Doctor, what treatment do you propose for the last patient ?”

“ Why, sir, for that combination of maladies the practice is allowed to differ greatly ; some are all for depletion ; others, again, all for tonics. The former say nothing but blood-letting will cure them ; the latter cry out to give them iron, or even, *in extremis*, lead. But these are violent remedies, such as an old and experienced surgeon will only have recourse to in the last stage. For my part, I must confess I have most readily found a cure in demulcents, with a kind and consistent mode of treatment, which combine to prove to the patient that their leeches will grant them every proper license, but no more.”

“ Doctor, your treatment is equal to your reputation. But you may strike out the last name from your list, as he is, I think, only shamming, and has a great deal of duty to

perform; while I fear that there has obtained in this ship a disease, which, if existing, I am determined to eradicate before it becomes epidemic."

"What is that, Captain Howard?"

"The system of practical joking upon matters of service. What think you, doctor, is the best medicine for that?"

And he looked at his surgeon with the severity of one who thinks he has his foe at his mercy. But he had miscalculated the strength of his antagonist, who, looking him back glance for glance, put his sick-list book under his arm, and replied—

"Sir, I will tell you of an incomparable medicine for that mania—one that was never known to fail of curing the most inveterate cases: a good example, Captain Howard—a good example, sir, is beyond every other medicine in the world! With your leave, sir, I'll deposit the sick-list below."

And having thus delivered himself, he slouched

out of the cabin, and, content with thus turning the tables on his superior, went to leave his list-book in his cabin, and then returned to the quarter-deck.

CHAPTER II.

Then you think
He will not be judged harshly ?

MARINO FALIERO.

“ DOES Cupid always shoot his arrows so sharply ?” said the captain, as soon as the Doctor had left the cabin.

“ Why, sir,” replied the first lieutenant, smiling, for he had witnessed the late colloquy with dread, “ he is at all times a very queer subject, and his temper sometimes gets the better of his discretion ; but, to compensate for that weakness, he is one of the kindest messmates I ever

saw, and you'll find him invaluable as an officer."

"I only hope I shall find him a little more subordinate. I have been told he is a man of genius, and am ready to make some allowances; but he must be brought to his tether like any one else. Now then to inspect the divisions."

Having said this, Captain Howard mounted the quarter-deck, and rapidly going through the inspection of his men, sent for his steward, desiring him to place luncheon in the cabin, for himself and officers. The men were then called around the capstan, to hear the reading of his commission. When this was concluded, he addressed to them a few words, as is generally the custom with captains appointed to a new command. As this introductory speech, though unpretending, was highly characteristic of the man, perhaps my readers would like to have an opportunity of forming their opinion of the same.

“ Now, my men,” quoth the captain, with that cheerful voice and manner which rarely failed to distinguish him, “ I am happy to tell you my belief that I have taken command of one of the noblest frigates and finest crews in the service, and I consider myself very fortunate in having succeeded so gallant an officer as your late captain. I rely on you all to second my efforts in serving your country. You shall have every indulgence, not only as regards liberty on shore, but plenty of fighting and lots of prize-money. There is one point, however, on which I wish to caution you ; in matters of discipline I am a taut hand, and when once the cat is set a going, it rarely stops short of four dozen. Having given you this fair warning, you had better profit by it. In five days the ship sails under sealed orders. Before that, I shall give to each watch four-and-twenty hours’ leave : if there is any skulking blackguard among you, he’d better take that opportunity to cut and run from this ship

as quickly as may be. He may rely upon it I shall never trouble my head to inquire after him. I shall allow you always to take to sea with you twelve of your wives ; so the ship's company must settle it among them, and draw lots who they are to be. All I have to say to you is, take care to let them be pretty women, for I hate ugly ones, and have determined to let none such stay on board : they generally have cursed tempers, and create nothing but rows. The starboard watch may now go on shore for twenty-four hours ; it is then to come off and relieve the larboard ; and my steward will find for each of you some money to drink to the success of the Epaminondas. Make the most of it while you are on shore, for he who gets drunk at sea gets flogged. It is a crime I never have forgiven, and I never will. Boat-swain's mate, pipe down."

The pipe was given, and the crew dispersed. The captain retired to his cabin, and in a few minutes afterwards the steward came to say

that Captain Howard requested the pleasure of his officers' company at luncheon. We now all hurried into his cabin, where we found a very handsome collation ; and as soon as he observed that nothing more was wanting, he waved his hand to his servants, and they retired.

“ Now, gentlemen,” said he, “ you have heard what I have told my men : to sum it up again to you in a few words, I hope that all of you will do your duties, and be as happy as you can. On the quarter-deck you'll find me a rigid officer ; in every other situation I sincerely hope a warm friend. Captain Rustone does me the favour to dine with me at the George to-day, and I hope you will all give me the pleasure of your company, while the junior lieutenants and the master must draw lots for remaining on board to take charge of the ship. Now let us fall too ; first of all, Dr. Caustic, the pleasure of a glass of wine.”

While things were thus proceeding in the

cabin, Jack Tar upon the fore-castle was all excitement at the capstan head.

“D—— me if ever I thought he was this sort of fellow!” said some of the older men. “I’m glad to hear we are not to have privateer’s discipline on board; and then about the women, Bo—that is a go surely, isn’t it?”

“Why, yes, messmate, if he keeps two wives in the cabin there, like a grand Turk, it wouldn’t be fair to be down upon us. We shall see *now* who are good men and who are not. Though, spite of all his talking about the cat, I don’t think there will be many desertions; no, not more than two, if there is so much as that. Now, as you and I are in the starboard watch, we’d better be off below, and get some rhino ready by the time we go ashore.”

Luncheon being concluded in the captain’s cabin, it fell to the lot of the junior lieutenant to remain on board; and at half-past five every other officer in the ship found his legs under

the well-covered mahogany of the hospitable Captain Howard.

To all of us this unexpected character of our new captain was a source of inconceivable delight; but by no one more than Captain Rustone himself was the pleasure of the evening enjoyed. He felt, indeed, that the meeting was one got up expressly for himself, to display to his late officers the esteem in which he was held by his successor, and was the result of a most amiable desire on the part of a young man of very great interest, to smooth away the bitterness of being superseded for a senior who had none.

On the fifth day from this dinner, the *Epinondas* weighed anchor, and made sail down Channel. By the time, however, that she drew near the Eddystone lighthouse, it blew so exceedingly hard, that Captain Howard, who said that he had no taste for bad weather, bore up and ran into Plymouth Sound. Here the surgeon very kindly volunteered to get leave

for me to go on shore, which he accordingly did, and, as we were only to be absent a few hours, we landed together.

After we had been strolling about some three hours, we ran against an unfortunate youngster who had missed his passage at Portsmouth, and who, without much chance of overtaking the ship, had come round to Plymouth Dock, as a "*dernier resort*." He had just arrived when he caught a sight of the surgeon from an inn window, and running out into the street, begged to have his advice as to how he should get on board, and make the necessary excuses.

He was one of those unhappy youths who are not very bright in intellect, and, like a fool in a nobleman's family, seemed to afford a common right of mirth to every one in the ship.

"My good boy," said the surgeon, "you've made a terrible mistake, and I don't know how you'll get over it. I don't know how to advise you for the best. I am very much afraid the first lieutenant will punish you severely."

“ So am I,” blubbered the boy ; “ that’s why I came to you, sir. If you could have taken me off with you——”

“ Why,” said Caustic, “ I can’t exactly do that ; but I think I can help the lame dog over the style for you in some sort of a way.”

“ I wish, sir, you would ; I should be so much obliged to you.”

“ Well, then, I will, and this is what you must do. Mr. Gibbon, the first lieutenant, is a freemason, and I will give you the freemason’s signs ; by your repeating them to him he’ll imagine you a mason as well as himself, and the storm will blow over.”

“ O, thank you—thank you, sir.”

“ Wait and listen. Go you on board.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And tell the first lieutenant that you’ve come down from Portsmouth. Then he’ll immediately begin to row you. Well, directly you see that, you put your left thumb up to the point of your nose, and then extend all your

fingers towards him as far as you can stretch—so.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, that’s the freemason’s first sign manual. If you see the first lieutenant’s anger does not stop at that, and he hesitates to recognise you in a kind, friendly manner, then keep your left hand still where it was, and add to the little finger of that the thumb of your right hand ; stretching all the fingers of it out as before, wag the whole of them at him very gently—so. On which, if he does not come up and shake you by the hand, say you are a fine lad, show you below, and ask you to dinner, why then, my boy, I am very much in the wrong—that’s all. All you have to do is to go through this fearlessly, and the thing will be settled.”

“ O thank you — thank you, sir ; I’m sure ——”

“ O, my good lad, don’t mention it ; you’re quite welcome ; only remember that this has

been communicated to you in strict confidence, as the freemason's signs are great secrets; consequently you must not think of breathing the matter to a single soul, except the first lieutenant."

The lad was all gratitude and obedience; and Caustic, with a face as grave as that of Justice Midas, stalked away.

After sauntering through Plymouth Dock for some hours, and purchasing the few necessities we required, we walked down to the port admiral's hard, and embarked in the ward-room boat that waited to take us off to the ship. The Epaminondas was lying between the island and the main, and soon after our rounding the Devil's Point we descried some unhappy wight, posted up at the fore-topmast-head, to enjoy the fine prospect and fresh air.

A little nearer approach convinced the surgeon and myself that this favoured individual was our friend the freemasonry middy. Caustic

laughed heartily at the scene which, doubtless, had taken place on board; and assuring me that the gross deception which had been put upon him would tend rather to improve than hurt my gentleman, finally expressed his determination to take him under his guidance.

We had no sooner arrived on board and reported ourselves, than Caustic inquired of Gibbon what well-behaved youth he had up at the foretopmast head?

“Well-behaved youth!” quoth Gibbon. “Hang me if I don’t think the lad’s gone mad. As soon as ever the captain comes on board I must report him, and if he gets what he deserves, it will be a slight acquaintance with the gunner’s daughter. It’s that fool Wiggins, you know, who lost his passage at Portsmouth; and having, by undeserved luck, found us here, came off to report himself. I no sooner began to cross-question him relative to his missing the ship at Spithead, than curse me if he didn’t begin to make the most ridi-

culous grimaces at me, before every soul upon deck; and when, utterly confounded, I asked him what he meant, he redoubled his fooleries. Upon my soul I don't know what the captain will do with him. I ordered him off at once to the masthead; but there the young ass stood, with the whole eight fingers and a couple of thumbs stuck out from the end of his nose—looking as gravely during the business as if he was merely taking the altitude of the sun, and every soul within sight cracking their sides to prevent laughter. 'Pon my honour, I felt so put out, I hardly knew whether to think myself awake or dreaming. However, to end the business, my gentleman was quickly whipped up to the foretop, and then he thought fit to go to the masthead of his own accord. What would you have me do with him, eh?"

"Why, call him down, Gibbon, from the mast-head, and ask him to dine with us in the ward-room; and as for his grimaces—I was the cause of those. He met me in Dock, and asking me to

take him off and propitiate your anger. I told him that you were a freemason, and on his executing those antics you witnessed, and which I told him were freemasons' signs, you would, I said, freely forgive his having missed his passage. To you, it appears, they were mere Hebrew; but this, my dear fellow, is the translation."

"And a devilish pretty translation it is, Doctor Caustic!" returned the first lieutenant, very angrily; "and, upon my word, I cannot at all thank you for the heedless way in which you have brought into public contempt the discipline of the ship in general, and my authority in particular."

"Tut, sir! tut!—you are going on false premises!—grounds wholly erroneous!—I conceive and believe, whatever you may think to the contrary, that I am as much entitled to perform my duty fearlessly, and under all circumstances, as you are; and such I beg to say I shall do."

“ And so, doctor, you may; and if by any of your cross logic you can prove that this tomfoolery with young Wiggins was a part of your duty, I will say no more about it.”

“ Well, then, you may hold your peace, and call the lad down at once. The health of the officers and crew of this ship should at all times be my first care.”

“ Granted.”

“ Good; and insanity and folly being, in my opinion, diseases most closely allied—or, indeed, I may even go so far as to say that the latter being but a mild form of the other—why, I conceived it my duty to consider young Wiggins in the light of a patient, and, by administering such a dose as suited my discretion, have gone a great way to cure the youth of one of folly’s first symptoms—credulity. That’s my practice, Mr. Gibbon; and if you like to discuss it with Captain Howard—welcome !”

The doctor’s hands were in his pockets, and himself on his road below, before Gibbon could

reply, which he did by muttering—"That's one view of *duty*, at any rate; but I suppose it's the best I shall get. All I can say is, that if Wiggins's is the mild case of insanity, the doctor's is the severe one!"

The lad was then called down, got a good lecture, and we all dined together in the ward-room in harmony.

My hammock was slung in the forepart of the steerage, and retiring somewhat late to rest that night, I heard the men beyond me talking of our probable destination, and when Captain Shimmy was likely to come on board. At first I was very much puzzled to make out who this Captain Shimmy could be, but on the following day learnt that it was the name given to Howard by the men, in commemoration of the mystic garment that hung up in his cabin.

The violence of the wind had by this time abated, and gone so far round to the southward as to permit of our slanting our course down Channel. At twelve o'clock Captain Shimmy

himself made his appearance ; and dinner being over, the ship was unmoored for the last time from English ground, and stood out to weather Penlee.

The sight of the rugged Cornish coast powerfully reminded me of my voyage from dear Ireland ; and the tears stood in my eyes as I remembered all I had there suffered, and how I was thus compelled to exile myself from everything most dear to me. Ah ! what would I not have given, like the ancient Roman, to have thrown myself upon the bosom of my mother earth, and taken one more farewell of the soil that had witnessed my sires flourish and decay ! Once more the old walls that had so long been my happy home uprose before me—the blue hills that I had daily seen since my earliest infancy hung like the faint land of promise and of hope around me, and the aspect and the voices, and the warm, warm welcome of those I loved, grew present to my eye, and sounded with a mournful melody in my ear. The sun shone

forth over the sweet heather down; the cattle stood in the sequestered pond, and sought the shade of the grove that fringed it; the river lessened in its channel, and gurgled along a rocky bed; and the bell of some old and wandering wether, or the bleat of a young sheep astray, came borne on the rushing breeze, odorous from the golden blossoms of the gorse.

Again my pony seemed to neigh beneath me as I paused to gaze upon the scene, not more familiar than beloved. My young dogs gambolled before me, and their sire stood by my side. At a distance followed my faithful servant, carrying my rod and gun. In yonder valley lived Kathleen's brothers, and she herself watching at that very hour the coming of her lover—Kathleen, whose remembrance still occupied every hour of my life since I first beheld her—whose love had been my greatest happiness, and whose mysterious disappearance and murder was the cause of all my misery, and the ruin—for scarcely could it be called

less—of all who belonged to me—the death of my brother, and the worse than death of one who had been the source of life to me !

And could it be that the beloved scene, so often witnessed, had now become but a resting-place for memory—an assemblage of mere shapes of air ? No, no ; all that was beautiful in Nature was still there—the scene as perfect as ever—man only was the sport of time and sorrow—and all around was now as bright and happy as if no cloud had ever come between the sun and me.

And what was I ?—a wanderer—without a home—almost without hope—or, if not that—my only hope, my only aim in life, was in some of my wanderings to stumble on the wretched villain Donaghue ; to have torn from whose bosom the secret of Kathleen's death, and to have possessed the power to punish its diabolical perpetrators, I would have willingly traversed the world barefooted ! Alas, at the best it was a poor consolation to bear me onward in my pilgrimage, but I had no other,

and therefore nursed it daily, hourly in my bosom, with as much tenderness as is felt by the parent that gives milk to a sickly and an only child.

CHAPTER III.

Full lightly fell his yoke upon our necks,
A yoke of love far more than servitude.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

ON the third day after we had taken our departure from the land, the sealed despatches were opened, and, as we anticipated, our destination found to be the West Indies, where our captain was ordered to put himself under the command of Sir Alexander Cochrane, then assembling a force at Barbadoes for the reduction of Martinique, one of the most valuable and desirable of the Carribbee islands in possession of the French.

The prospect of being so soon in active service was received with delight by every one on board ; and while a few—myself included—who had never been in the West Indies before, ventured to wish that our honourable captain had obtained the more healthy station of the Mediterranean, we did not fail to console ourselves with reflecting that in our present case we had a better chance of prize-money, and that if our life was a short, it would at least be a merry one.

This stirring intelligence was first communicated to the officers at the captain's table, where three officers from the ward-room, and three more from the middy's berth, were daily asked to demolish the best of the sheep, pigs, poultry, &c., which had so astounded the weak mind of Gibbon at Spithead.

When Captain Howard took this opportunity of telling us whither we were bound, he also added his firm hopes that we should not go out to the admiral empty handed.

“ With so fine a frigate,” said he, “ that were indeed a shame on fortune, or on us ; so let the men know, Mr. Gibbon, that whoever is lucky enough to discover an enemy’s frigate shall have twenty dollars from my clerk. I must say I should like to take a French two-and-thirty into Barbadoes, with the English Jack floating over the tricolor ; it would be a good earnest of the Epaminondas’ future fortune.”

“ I hope we may, sir,” said the first lieutenant ; “ I should like nothing better, or the men either, who will be much obliged to you for the dollars at any rate.”

The dinner passed away as agreeably as those which had preceded it, and we found that, however fortune might prosper us with captures, she had at least given us the most desirable evidence of her favour in our captain.

At quarters, the weather looking rather suspicious, a couple of reefs were taken in the top-sails ; and the captain’s offer, being made known to the men, was received with the utmost joy.

The ship's fiddler was had up on the forecastle, and the men's wives assembling, they, at a great premium, chose their partners, and Jack's whole soul expanded in a regular "fling."

In this, as in all matters on board a ship, the captain's wishes had obtained the force of law, since the men had not only sought to bring the prettiest of their wives to sea, but had succeeded ; and many an hour have I sat and watched the happy dancers who, seeming not to know what care or sorrow was, kicked away in the full joyousness of their hearts, as contented with Nancy and Sue as if they had kingdoms at their command.

Many gloomy misanthropical officers would exclaim against such a relaxation, and I am sorry to say that I had afterwards full opportunity of contrasting such characters with that of Captain Howard. But I am sure that the duty of the ship never suffered from Jack's amusement and pleasure being looked to ; on the contrary, the forecastle hops, as they were

termed, were made conducive to avoiding the punishment of the cat; for it was part of the duty of the boatswain's mate of the watch to see that no man was allowed to join in the dance whose name was on the black list; and this alone proved in most cases to be a very severe check upon the minor class of offences.

While these were the amusements of the crew, the captain and officers were nightly in the habit of enjoying a few rubbers at whist, from eight till eleven o'clock in the cabin. All were allowed to join the tables but the officers of the middle watch, lest sitting up out of order should tempt them to neglect their duty, and go to sleep on their posts. Such of the mids, also, as had got into the disfavour of the first lieutenant, were excluded for a week, more or less, at his pleasure. The stakes were fixed at sixpence, and the captain always put his winnings into a box, whose funds bought any additional comfort or little luxuries for the sick. We were also under a strict promise of

honour that not a card should be played in any other part of the ship.

That these several indulgences to officers and crew produced no ill effects, we soon had a striking instance ; for one evening, while all hands, with the exception of those employed on duty, were thus amusing themselves, the look-out at the masthead announced a strange sail on the lee bow.

At this moment the sentry went forward and struck one bell after eight o'clock. The officer of the watch, having ascertained that the look-out was correct, immediately went down and reported the fact to the captain, who, with the first lieutenant, at once repaired on deck. There were at this time two whist tables formed in the cabin, at one of which Gibbon was playing. When he rose, I, who had been looking on, took his place ; while the captain, who had been reading, laid down his book, and no further notice of the matter was taken.

There was now just light enough to

descry the strange sail. Captain Howard and the master both went to the masthead, and both pronounced her to be something of larger size even than ourselves ; and soon after our bearing up to run down and inspect her, they gave us also the intelligence that we sailed nearly two feet for her one. Still, as we drew nearer, the report that the stranger was of superior force gained ground ; and first the party at one whist table broke up, and then the other. The fiddle, also, had disappeared from the fore-castle, the women had retired below, and the night-glasses quickly proved to us that we were approaching a seventy-four, whose poop was now first visible from the deck.

“ Let the drum beat to quarters,” said the captain ; and in three minutes both idlers and the watch below were roused from their hammocks, and each man in his place.

“ We must use some caution in approaching this fellow,” continued our superior. “ I wish we had discovered him some four hours since :

we should better have made him out. I always use night signals with distrust, since some accidental blunder may be the means of one's giving to brother John Bull as fine a broadside as ever tickled the ribs of Jean Crapeau : and in our case, where the force is so disproportioned, we can't afford to go within hail, though that's the surest plan. Get the signal lanterns ready, while I go down below for a few minutes."

As soon as the captain returned on deck, he directed the first lieutenant as to what lanterns he should hoist for the night signal, while all hands were busy examining the dark mass to leeward, in expectation of a reply : not a sign of anything of the sort, however, was given. Away the huge vessel bore, under double reefed topsails, jib and spanker bending over to the fresh breeze that swept exulting and refreshingly along the ocean, nor even deigning either to turn one tittle from what seemed her midnight "path along the

deep," nor by the exhibition of lantern, rocket, blue light, or aught beside, to notice the approach of the English frigate.

"Perhaps the loom of the night deceives us, Mr. Gibbon," said the captain, looking up at the lights which hung from our peak, while the spanker was brailed up to make them more distinctly visible. "We may be further from him than we imagine, and so he be unable to see our lanterns."

"No, I don't think that possible, sir."

"Nor I either; yet I'll try him a little longer before I pronounce him an enemy. Meanwhile we have the weather-gage, and so will keep it. Directly you think we're within a long shot, heave-to on his quarter."

"Ay, ay, sir. Maintop there! Master!"

"Sir!"

"Report when you consider us to be within long-shot of the stranger's guns."

"Very well, sir."

Three, four, five, eight minutes elapsed, and

we were one mile nearer to the chase, which now loomed forth a ship of noble size, bearing some five points before the beam.

“Lower the signal lanterns from the peak, Mr. Gibbon,” said the captain, “and hoist them up to the foretop-gallant-mast-head to leeward. As our top-gallant sails are not set, he will then have no excuse for not seeing them.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

The signals were now immediately lowered from abaft, and hoisted forwards. Scarcely were the halyards belayed, when the clear deep voice of the master was heard singing out from the maintop,—

“Quarter-deck there !”

“Holloa !”

“Within long-shot now, sir.”

“Ha !” was the universal exclamation from half-a-dozen voices. A fierce flash issued forth from the midst of the dark pyramid to leeward, illuminating the whole horizon, and plainly revealing the double row of chequered ports that

distinguish a ship of the line ; a rushing sound was heard immediately succeeding, and a shot came dashing onward from the crest of one dark wave to the summit of another, and finally burying itself beneath a pile of foam not five hundred yards to leeward of the quarter-deck.

The sullen boom of the distant gun now came heavily upon the ear, and spoke, in the stillness of the night, of the weight of the stranger's metal ; seeming a meet voice for one who carried with her such an air of mystery and dread.

“A very friendly reply that, to a private signal, upon my word !” said Captain Howard to the first lieutenant, who had returned to his side.

“Haul down the lanterns forward—and heave-to. That must be a Frenchman carrying out supplies to some of the distressed islands.”

“I think it is very likely, sir.”

“Then if so, my good fellow, we don't part

till I see what becomes of Monsieur. Had we only two decks instead of one, I should beg to run alongside of him; but that not being the case, I hope yet to see him safe into the hands of some brother officer who is happily better mounted. Do you think we should stand any chance of carrying him, Mr. Gibbon, if we ran him aboard?"

"I should be very cautious in attempting it, sir, were I you. In the first place—setting aside the great disparity of our crews, which is two to one against us—you may be sure that, if a Frenchman, he's got at least the best part of a regiment on board; and with such a sea on, the roll of that ship must be tremendous. We should lose nearly a third of our men overboard; another third would be shot by the small-arm men, before we could even gain a footing on her decks."

"Yes! I fear that experiment would be rather too dangerous; so, for the present, as we have quite the heels of him—perhaps from his

being very deeply laden—we'll be content to hang upon his quarters, and knock away as much as we can of his gilding and ginger-bread work."

"I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to do much, even at that, sir; for the wind's freshening; and as it is, we can't fight our main-deck guns to leeward—the only side which will be available to us. As for the forecastle twelves, he won't care much for those; and a carronade range will be too near to venture: for, if we lose a spar, and he hauls up enough to get a broadside at us, there ought not to be much left of the Epaminondas."

"*But her name*—add, Mr. Gibbon, if you please," said the captain, with a marked emphasis; then continuing the discussion. "I know we must be careful; still, something can be done; and"——

At this moment, forth burst another flash from the side of the seventy-four; a second and a third followed; and, while the shot

plunged and plashed idly around the frigate, down went the ports of the stranger's main-deck, and displayed the ship's company at quarters.

“There, she shows her teeth at last, Gibbon ! Upon my word,”—after a long steady gaze through the night-glass,—“my mind misgives me as to the nation to which that ship belongs. If she really be French, she has on board a better officer than many we fall in with : or is she British ? My blood runs cold at the bare idea of the last ; so, before we fire a shot in anger, try her with the private signal at the peak again.”

“Perhaps the hoisting of it forward might have puzzled them.”

Once more up went the lights ; and long and anxiously did Captain Howard wait to see them acknowledged—but in vain. Once more, he came to the conclusion that the vessel must be French ; still, determined to give them every chance, he had the peak halyards belayed, and

the lights kept aloft, while he now set to work to return the fire, which, like a great unfriendly bully, the strange seventy-four bellowed forth from time to time, as a fine opportunity might present itself to those at her guns.

Whoever they might be—whether French or English—they were excellent marksmen, since almost every shot that was thrown came in a line with the Epaminondas' waist; though, from the increasing distance, they fell more and more short of the mark for which they were intended.

For twenty minutes the frigate continued in her station, hove-to; while the seventy-four, never having interrupted her course, was now nearly two miles further distant.

“If that isn't the oddest fellow I ever saw,” quoth the captain, “I know nothing about the matter. I do not see how he can be considered anything but a Frenchman; and if so, he appears to have a very distinct notion that we come from the other side of the Channel. Yet one would think he might venture on some en-

deavour to lay hold of us ; a frigate to a seventy-four is long odds, surely. Yet there he goes, like a bull-dog from a little terrier ; showing his teeth, and troubling himself to do no more. Devilish odd fellow !—puzzles me altogether ! What do you say to him, Mr. Gibbon ? Can you reconcile his inconsistencies ?”

This was the devil’s own sentence for Gibbon ; two long words, and so close together ! he could make nothing of that, much less the enemy, and therefore contented himself with shaking an answer from a silent head ; which, if it doesn’t show a wise man, is yet a distinct mark of a prudent one.

“ Well, Mr. Gibbon, I have now given him trial enough, and as well as I can, with such disparity of force,” continued the captain, assuming a gravity that, to us, was an entirely new feature in his character, “ I shall now bear down to engage him. Should anything happen to me, or any mistake occur, you will remember the circumstances ; and remember, sir, my reasons for my conduct.”

“I cannot believe that she is a British man-of-war, or she would endeavour to bring us to action, *far* as we are to windward of her! If she be, on the other hand, the ship of another nation, she deserves all she may get by firing at us. Such a sea as this must, from its excessive roll, cause the steadiest seventy-four to keep her lower-deck ports shut; ours on the main-deck can, however, with good management, be kept open and serviceable: and the deuce is in it, if one of the finest frigates in King George’s service may not prove an awkward customer under such circumstances. If I’m disposed of, therefore, you shall see that I’m not condemned for temerity; and I’ll take care that no one brings the other extreme against me. So now, then, let two of the main-deck guns be got upon the fore-castle, if it be practicable in such weather for a seaman’s skill to manage it. Go forward, and give orders to dismount the chase-guns, to make room, and let them be ex-

changed for the twenty-four pounders. What with two twenty-fours on this deck, and two in the bridle-ports on the main, we shall have a nice little battery of four guns to tickle up our friends there, and that without showing much mark for him in return."

"Your plan is excellent, sir," said Mr. Gibbon, laughing; "but shifting guns in such weather as this is not very easy."

"True! but to accommodate a Frenchman, you know, Gibbon, one can go a little out of the way; they are so devilishly polite, we should otherwise lose our character. While you are busy doing the agreeable there then, I'll edge down upon his quarter. For the next three hours we shall have a capital sort of glimmer for our operations; and though the weather is so cloudy we can't see the moon, we shall have the benefit of her reflection till then, to all the extent we want it."

In conformity with these orders, the first

lieutenant went below upon the main-deck, and, after considerable trouble, and the lapse of three quarters of an hour, reported that everything was ready for the Frenchman's amusement.

“Now, then, do you take up your post on the main-deck. As soon as I give the first word to fire, you may consider that we are near enough to effect my purpose. Collect the eight best marksmen from among the ship's company, and distribute two to each of our four guns : you superintend those below, and I'll look out above. Let your guns be fired just as we rise on the crest of the wave ; for it is better to fire too high than too low. If the former, we stand a chance of knocking away that big bully's spars ; and, by the latter, only emulate that mad block-head Xerxes, in attempting to punish the water. Your men, remember, are to aim at the enemy's rudder-coat ; for if we can disable him, there he's done for. I, on the other hand, will try for his foremast — you for your promo-

tion,—I for a baronetcy ; so to it, heart and soul.”

“ Master !”

“ Sir !”

“ Take you the conn. You have heard what I want to effect ; place the *Epaminondas* on the quarter of the enemy within good gunshot. Keep the weather-gage at all hazards ; and, if possible, just in that angle which will be equally safe from his broadsides, and difficult for any temporary gun to touch from his cabin windows. Take as many men from their quarters as you can require for sail-trimmers, and do your best. I leave the ship in your charge, as far as manœuvring goes, for the present. I think there’s too much wind for the enemy to attempt tacking—is there not ?”

“ I think so, sir.”

“ Very well, then, all we have to fear is his taking it into his head to wear. But if he does, and you look sharp, we need not even then get a broadside ; so remember that the moment

you fancy he has put his helm up for that purpose, put you ours down to go about. I don't think, hard as it blows, there's much chance of our missing stays—is there?"

"I've worked the Epaminondas in worse weather, sir," replied the master.

"Then, please Heaven, we'll try her in this. Now, then, courage to the back bone, and a little coolness, and we'll see what those sullen fellows to leeward are made of."

During the time that these several orders were being given, there reigned upon the quarter-deck a silence so perfect that every word was distinctly heard and treasured up by the seamen, who now, for the first time, had an opportunity of witnessing the conduct of their captain on going into action. It is here that the rude untutored sailor becomes the keen and effective critic, and, with the whole energies of heart and soul alive, devotes both to trying how far his superior is worthy by courage and skill to lead him on. This point once ascer-

tained, he at once renders to him that boundless confidence which follows until death, and knows neither to doubt the success about to ensue, nor question the course by which it is to be attained. In the present instance they were indeed elated at the determined way in which a seeming youngster, with scarcely any down upon his chin, could throw himself on the support afforded by the affections and abilities of his officers and men, and venture into a peril that the bravest veterans might have most honourably declined.

As the strong sweeping gust came steadily down in one determined gale from to windward, rolling over and over the dark breezy billows of the ocean, and rushing with a mournful sound and almost resistless strength upon its course, the dense dark masses of water that but a moment before were sleeping in the hollow of the seas, no sooner mounted on their summit than they were scattered to the corners of the heaven, and whirled over the frigate in one

continuous mass of spray. But the greater the sound, the more soul-subduing the roar of the elements; as volume after volume of water dashed against her side, the more sternly exulting in their daring bosoms did the spirit of her sailors confide in her strength. As the howl of the tempest surged away to leeward in the gloom and horror of a stormy night on the vast Atlantic, it bore to their huge antagonist not one whisper of doubt or hesitation, far less fear.

With the quickness peculiar to seamen, every man and boy in the ship knew that his captain was both daring and cool, and with that knowledge they were content to venture anything. How the issue of the night might go, they knew not. The fortunes of war most of them had seen and experienced, and none could know better how fickle were these. The carrying away of a single spar by one unlucky shot might bring them within the

deadly grasp of their gigantic foe, to perish like a wasp crushed by a bear; but there would then at least be consolation in having died in more than discharging their duty; and if they lived to tell the tale, who would not feel a prouder man for being in that frigate which, single-handed, bore down to the attack of a seventy-four?

As to making a prize of the huge thing before them, that, they knew, without some singular interference of good fortune in their behalf, could never be effected, although such an event would indeed have been a matter of rejoicing: but even the glory of the attack was enough to repay them for all. As these thoughts crowded on the minds of the seamen, they looked with indifference alike at the terrors of the strife or the tempest, and resolved from the depths of their hearts to do their duty. Many were seen shaking hands over their guns with one an-

other; congratulating themselves that they were then, with all the excitement and enthusiasm of true valour, going into action, while one captain of a quarter-deck carronade was heard saying to another, “ Hang me, Bob Allen, but Shimmy’s the boy for them after all!”

CHAPTER IV.

“ Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own ;
No maiden’s arm is round thee thrown.”

LADY OF THE LAKE.

SINCE the captain had delivered the last order to the master, the latter had come aft on the quarter-deck and taken his station in the hammock nettings, abreast of the wheel, whence he could give his directions to the man at the helm ; while, standing up with his arm resting on the mizen rigging for support, he was in possession of a full view of the chase.

The storm raged and howled around him, and the spray of the mountainous waves, as

they curled after the quarter of that glorious craft, was dashed oftentimes in his face ; but he, like the men at the quarters below him, had his whole heart and his thoughts on his duty, and noticed neither the one nor the other ; unless by an occasional glance at the close-reefed topsails above, to see how they bore the immense strain upon them, or by casting his eye on the raging billows, to watch if they were likely to impede the use of the ship's guns.

As for the captain, he stood at the weather gangway, with his night telescope in one hand, and the other holding on by an iron stanchion, as calm and collected as if running into St. Helen's with a top-gallant-sail breeze.

“ Master, we're now within long-shot once more, are we not ? ”

“ Near upon it, sir.”

“ Very good : then we'll try our distance. On the main-deck there ! Mr. Gibbon ! ”

“ Sir ! ”

“ Take aim, and fire at your leisure.”

“ Ay, ay, sir !”

“ Signal lieutenant, Mr. Montagu !”

“ Sir !”

“ Take your signal midshipman and a couple of night glasses, and go forward into the fore topmast staysail netting. I rely on you to tell me how our shots fall.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

In two minutes Montagu was at his post. Bang went the first gun from the lee-bow port on the main-deck. The flash was scarcely seen before the dull, quick, sharp sound of cannon in a gale of wind was swept away down the dark and troubled Atlantic, to tell our opponents, if the shot did not, that the ship of the avenger was behind them.

“ Where did that shot fall, Mr. Montagu ?”

“ About a quarter of a mile astern, sir, as near as I could see for the spray.”

“ Below there on the main-deck !—Give your gun two more points elevation.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

“ Master, edge down a little nearer. Fire again on the main-deck as soon as you have taken aim. Now look out, Mr. Montagu.”

Bang went the second gun.

“ Where did that shot fall?”

“ Abeam of the enemy, sir.”

“ Bravo ! Main-deck there !”

“ Sir !”

“ You have your range—keep that, and now fire away steadily. Master, this is the distance you’re to keep as nearly as possible : and now for a little target practice myself !”

As the captain said this, he advanced to the fore-castle, and taking aim with one of the twenty-four pounders, while the senior mate, who was an excellent marksman, took charge of the other, the ship was hove-to, and a messenger despatched to Gibbon to ascertain the exact elevation of the last shot fired. The first lieutenant having written this down on a card, the captain gave his guns the slightest addi-

tion of range, and marking their opportunity when the ship rose well on the water, both the little batteries commenced firing.

“ There you hit him, sir, there you hit him, I’m sure,” cried Montagu from the forestay-sail-netting, as the first fire opened from the forecastle. I catch sight of your shot tripping up in his wake, but I can’t detect them going wide of the mark on either side.”

Bravo ! then, bravo ! since that’s the case, he shall have plenty of it. Well done, Gibbon, on the main-deck there ! Don’t spare his rudder-coat. Come, my boys, load quickly. No time’s to be lost when the game’s not only in sight and in cover, but cocking his tail up at you into the bargain. Now are you ready again ? A little higher—so—put in the coign. Now then wait for the next rise—there, fire once more, that’s for his silence—come, quick, sponge and load—this is very fine fun, Gibbon ; let us make the most of it while we have it all to ourselves.”

“ Enemy’s firing, sir,” sang out the master.

“ Whew ! so he is !” replied Captain Howard, as the pale flash of the more distant gun lit up the heavens in return to his own. Another and another followed, but they all came tripping far away on the weather-bow of the Epaminondas.

“ Go it, Johnny, go it ! Master, keep us in this angle, and we can’t sustain much harm from our fat friend to leeward. How do the shots fall, Mr. Montagu ?”

“ Can’t be better, sir.”

“ That’s right—speak to them, my boys, as they come along : tell them to keep to the right, for here there’s no thoroughfare, and trespassers shall have the rigour of the law ! Well done below on the main-deck—your shots are telling ; don’t spare them !”

Nor did they. Stimulated by this cheering intelligence, as well as the enthusiastic share which their young commander took in the fray, both officers and men exerted themselves

to the utmost. Shot after shot whistled from the bows of the gallant frigate, as, keeping up the exact position where the courage and skill of her officers kept her harmless, she was thus, and thus alone, enabled to sustain the unequal fight.

The seventy-four, however, which had so long behaved to them as if trying to exhibit the most marked contempt for their strength, now seemed to feel that she had no despicable enemy with whom to cope; and after a few more rounds had been fired from the Epaminondas, the master interrupted his captain's cheering with the cry, "Enemy's opened his fire from the cabin windows."

"So much the better," replied the captain, "that'll air the curtains for them. Ha! faith but that's as far to leeward as the other was to windward. He'll soon get sick of wasting such excellent ammunition in that way;" and the captain laughed as he looked at the shot that now fell on our lee-beam, while

between the two lines of fire the *Epaminondas* unscathed held on her course.

“That’s right, you varmint,” cried the men to one another, “make a lane for your betters.”

“Lose no time on the main-deck, consistent with taking a good aim,” resumed the captain. “Holloa! what’s coming now? Egad, if it isn’t a shell thrown from her poop; that’ll fall a long way short, or I’m a Dutchman—a Frenchman’s trick all over. There it goes, ‘in the vast bosom of the ocean buried,’ as Shakspeare hath it;” and down indeed did sink, with a degree of beauty never to be forgotten, that beautiful bow of fire traced by the burning missile, which, thrown by too small a mortar, was quenched in the dark world of waters like a spark from an anvil.

“Load away, my lads, load quickly; we must soon knock down some of his spars! A seventy-four makes a capital target when his

teeth are muzzled. Seeing but not feeling them is excellent amusement. Mr. Montagu, are all the enemy's spars still standing?"

"Yes, sir, but I feel convinced some of them must be wounded."

"So think I," replied the captain. "Now you and I, Mr. Harvey, will fire together a round shot and a double-headed one each. Aim a little higher than before, a mere trifle, and say when you're ready."

The mate and his commander now both knelt down and took a steady aim.

"Ready," cried the latter.

"Ready," repeated Mr. Harvey.

"Now then we rise," said his superior, as the ship mounted the sea; "*fire!*"

Scarcely had the smoke cleared away to leeward, when the voice of the master was heard singing out,

"Enemy's mizen topmast gone over his side!"

“ Hurrah ! ” cried the captain.

“ Enemy’s about to wear,” roared out the master.

“ Bear down in his wake,” cried the captain, taking the command with a sudden and stern degree of animation. “ Starboard your helm ! Hands by the lee braces and fore and main clue garnets ; ease off—let fall—haul on board the four and main tacks—main-deck quarters below there ! stand by the larboard broadside : elevate your guns well, and prepare to rake the enemy’s stern.”

“ Ay, ay, sir,” replied Gibbon.

“ Be cool and steady, my men, and don’t throw away one shot : stand by the larboard broadside on the quarter-deck.”

In less time than it has taken to write these orders, they were given and executed. The frigate, put almost before the wind, darted like a young tiger to attack the howdahed elephant ; while, as her close-reefed courses fell and were hauled on board, with a sound like that of distant

thunder, the mainsail was blown clean from its bolt-ropes, without leaving behind it a rag the size of a pocket handkerchief, and floated away on the raging blast to leeward, first like a small white cloud, and then a mere dark patch, until in another second it had disappeared.

At this awful moment not a sound was heard on board but the roaring of the wind and the surging of the seas, as, lashed into the wildest foam, they hissed and bubbled round that noble vessel's armed side, and she flying over them like a water-bird that strikes its prey. The captain was the first to break the silence.

"I thought as much," said he, looking at the vacant bolt-ropes of the mainsail, "but it was necessary—she felt it, master!" and he laid his hand on the shoulder of his faithful inferior.

"I expect the fore-course to follow it every minute, sir."

"So do I; but let it hold on for three more,

and I can show that fellow a manœuvre he doesn't see every day."

The master said nothing in reply. Old seaman as he was, even he had been taken by surprise; but too good an officer to drop a word that might check his captain, he could only look on with apprehension for the fate of a ship that long services had rendered dearer to him than life.

"Bravo foresail! bravo! Hold on but a few seconds more, good canvass! Stand ready with the larboard broadside," cried the captain, as the *Epaminondas*, leaping from wave to wave with a velocity that made her timbers tremble, ran down directly under the stern of her huge opponent.

"There, she opens on us at last!" said Howard, as two flashes burst from the seventy-four's cabin window; but the gunners had had no time to depress their guns sufficiently, and while one shot had uselessly cut off the cross-

jack yardarm, the other, equally innoxious, passed between the fore and main topsails.

At this moment, so critical to the safety of the combatants, the moon temporarily broke through the bank of clouds that had enveloped her, and concentrated all her rays upon the stern of the seventy-four. The foaming sea, in one spot like a blaze of light, with its silvery froth and the black blue of the surrounding Atlantic—the noble ship driving before the gale in her process of wearing—the dark, lowering heavens beyond—the fleetly rushing frigate, and the glorious contrast in the sky of light and shadow, made up a scene of unsurpassable sublimity, while the tempest and the battle formed a chorus worthy of its originality.

With a quickness that partook of inspiration, the captain sprang over to the larboard waist-grating, and, calling to his men below, pointed to the seventy-four.

“Fortune favours the brave, my men! Be

steady in your aim, and cool—watch the frigate's rise—fire !”

Swift at the word, the lambent flame of death flashed round from stem to stern of the *Epaminondas*. Forth hurtled the many messengers of death, and as they swept along into the stern of the devoted line-of-battle ship, the roaring of the gale could not drown either the dreadful whistle with which they were propelled, or the shriek of agony with which the broadside was received.

Scarcely was the thunder of the first gun given than the captain's voice was heard—
“Ready about—man the foreclue garnets—hands by the foresheet. Clue up. Down with the helm, master. Helm's a lee ! Stand by the weather-main-topsail-brace and bowline ! Main topsail haul ! How's the enemy, master ? Does she come to on the other tack ?”

“Not yet, sir.”

“Then her rudder is damaged, and she won't steer. Ready with the fore-topsail brace—haul

avault. Now, then, once more for the enemy. Edge down on her larboard quarter, master—'tis a jewel of a ship!—stand by to give the enemy the starboard broadside—ready on the main-deck?"

"All ready, sir!"

"Be cool and steady, my men—fire!"

Once more the frigate's deadly storm was sent over the water, and ere her captain could see through the volumes of smoke that rolled away, the master's quick eye detected the result.

"Enemy's mizen-mast gone by the board, sir!—Enemy trying to haul off on his old tack!—Enemy's mizen-mast gone overboard!" And then, surely enough, did Howard now perceive rolling on the merciless ocean the wreck of his huge adversary, for it could scarcely be called less.

"Hurrah! then, my lads," cried the captain in an ecstasy; "give him three cheers at any rate; fair exchange is no robbery any day in

the week ; and then once more about, and let him have the other broadside ; we shall never have a time like this again.”

Suiting the word to the action, with as little loss of time as possible, the crew of the frigate gave three hearty cheers, while the master put the helm down, to come about once more. So close were the ships at this moment, that the officers of the seventy-four were plainly distinguishable on the poop, clearing away the wreck of the mizen-mast ; which was no sooner done than a perfect swarm of soldiers appeared, and commenced firing with small arms.

“ I could have sworn, Gibbon, that she had troops aboard,” said the captain coolly to the first lieutenant, who now returned to the quarter-deck. “ I see now why she was so unwilling to be brought to action. She must be taking out reinforcements, supplies, and despatches, and so is ordered to avoid all engagements. I suppose friend Bony thinks by that means she’ll steal through our seas unseen.”

“Mighty few, by my soul, sir, do that.”

“True! but then again, it’s the only plan of effecting it; for supposing that a frigate can but knock a single spar away from a seventy-four, still that may cause the wounded bird to be picked up elsewhere. The firing has brought the wind down a little, Gibbon; but never did I see a ship work so well as this of ours. What’s that gone there — foretop-gallant mast?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Ah, we can spare that. Send some hands aloft to clear away the wreck; we may want to shake out a reef presently; but I hope the wind won’t go down much more. That’s right — round with her, master. I don’t think those fellows on the main-deck of our big friend seem to do much harm; and since his rudder appears so disabled as to be unfit for use, he must run before the wind now, whether he likes it or not. For the future, therefore, we’ll be content with yawing in his wake, and giving him

first one broadside and then the other, till he cries out, ‘Enough.’”

“That’ll be the quickest plan, sir, certainly ; and I don’t think there’s much fear of his getting his rudder free.”

“No, no ; that seems pretty well jammed in a clench. Could the truth be known, I dare swear it’s nearly cut in two about the rudder-coat. Indeed, if that had not been the case, he would have rounded to, long before this, and given us his broadside. O yes—here we have him fair again ;--ready, my men, with the larboard broadside—take your time—fire !”

Away rattled the frigate’s double-shotted guns at the word, and away flew the splinters from the seventy-four’s stern, where still at intervals three of the main-deck guns kept playing on the frigate, though, as the reader has seen, without much injury even to the sails.

“Now then for the yawing, master,” cried the captain, when the broadside was fired. “Sail-trimmers to the braces. What cursed

bad shots those fellows must be, not to have cut us up more in our rigging, master."

The word could hardly have passed the captain's lips, when down went the line-of-battle-ship's gun-room ports—forth flashed the flame, as if from the very bowels of the sea—and the low bass growl of a thirty-two pounder found its way up to windward, and told the frigate that a heavier metal was now to be employed against her.

Within a second after this, the master cried out, "Hulled us at last!"

"Where?" demanded the captain.

"One shot has nearly cut in two every boat upon the booms, and the other, I think, has gone in upon the main-deck. We must have a care now, sir."

"Ay, ay, master, many I hope; but we've not done quite enough yet. Two thirty-two pounders are no great things to silence a frigate's broadside. Only please fortune to favour my sticks, and see how I'll stick to fortune!"

The men who caught this repartee of the captain answered it with a cheer, and the frigate yawing again, another broadside was rattled into the stern timbers of the seventy-four.

“If that fellow hasn’t his gun-room ports closed in a twinkling,” said the captain, “his lower-deck will want no washing, to a certainty. There goes a wave that’ll poop him—on it goes—there it rolls! Have they got their ports down yet, master?”

“No, sir; but they’re running their guns out.”

“So much the better! There, he has it! Right into his lower-deck. His pumps will soon be wanting part of his crew; those guns won’t be dry enough for firing for some time, I’m sure. Quick, then, master!—Run down in her wake. Right after her! Give us a yaw upon her larboard quarter, and then we’ll slap a broadside in at pistol-shot distance. Main-deck there! ready with your starboard

broadside. Wait till you're pretty close aboard, and give her grape and canister, my boys, to make the round shot lie easy."

Obedient to the word, down flew the gallant and easy-working frigate after the great liner, and, speeding along ten feet for the other's one, was soon close under the counter.

"Ready on the main-deck!" cried the captain; "take your aim pretty low for wind and water—fire! Well done! Now again, load quickly, and be steady; fire away as hard at it as you can. This is the position, master—keep us here. Nothing can touch us but the small-arm men, and they're sea-sick."

This idea tickled the blue jackets uncommonly; they laughed and fired, and joked and loaded, and called out to one another "to make hay while the sun shone;" stripped to their skins the while to work the better, never feeling the blast that whistled round them, or the spray it bore.

The captain had, however, in one matter

made a slight mistake. Their position was not quite so unassailable as he imagined, for a few minutes afterwards the brilliant arch of light that once more rose from the seventy-four's poop, showed she had not forgotten her bombshells. Whether the result of accident or skill, I know not, but this projectile displayed on the part of the enemy an infinitely better aim than any which had preceded it, for lighting in the middle of the boats it passed through to the lower-deck, and there exploded, wounding only two men, and more injuring the booms than aught beside, except the boats, which were sadly shattered.

“Fire-men, from the fore-castle quarters,” cried the first lieutenant; “and a few buckets of water to put out this yarn,”—some of which, from its contact with the contents of the shell, showed a disposition to smoulder. This was, however, instantly arrested.

“Fair play’s a jewel, Mr. Master,” said the

captain; “so sheer over to the other quarter, and hammer at that a little.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied old Soundings; “though you’ve only spoke in time, sir, for here comes another shell.”

“And welcome, master, for it won’t fall on board. No, there he goes, like the first, after the cares of Richard—just clear of our stern. Fire away on the main-deck there—give it to them again. Are they trying to open those lower-deck stern ports once more, master?”

“No, sir; I think not.”

“What’s that, then, I see?”

“Where, sir?” asked the first lieutenant.

“There, Gibbon, under the stern gallery! Surely it’s the gun-room port going up?”

“No, sir, it’s not a port—it’s smoke!—by Jove the enemy’s on fire!”

“That is she, indeed, Gibbon; and in no slight way either,” re-echoed Soundings, “for there goes a column up forward as high as the foremast head.”

“By the lord Harry, but you’re right!” cried the captain, looking at their foe as if he doubted the evidence of his senses. “*She is on fire*; and what’s more, if they can’t get it under, they must strike. Think of that, my brave fellows!” and he laid a hand on the shoulders of each of his officers as they stood on either side of him.

The action said, as plain as words could speak it, “and you are first among the gallant men I have to thank for enabling me to do it!”

They too interpreted the feeling aright, though neither attempted to reply to it by a word; while their captain, with all the generous enthusiasm of youth, grasping a hand of each, exclaimed, “I would not give up this glorious night—no—not for the highest peerage of the realm!”

Then, after a pause, as he stood anxiously gazing at the seventy-four, the exulting gaze of conquest melted rapidly away into that of the

deepest melancholy, as he added, "That fire gains on them rapidly ; let them but once hoist their colours and haul them down again, and we'll do the best we can to save their crew ; and so, to bring this about the more readily, let us redouble our efforts ; and first of all bring aft to the gangway the two long twenty-four-pounders that we used in the chase—they are lost where they are."

Away sprang the first lieutenant and his men, to execute the order ; and away went the captain below, to cheer his crew on to their utmost. As if his merely quitting the deck was the signal for the enemy to gain some advantage, another shell fell into the main-chains ; and the enemy, to all appearance, growing perfectly desperate, opened from their wardroom cabin a fire of at least five pieces. These were speedily detected to be thirty-two pounders hoisted up from the deck below. Regardless, seemingly, of their own ship, if they could only destroy their little but determined

assailant, they had fired right through their quarter-galleries; and so the angle in which the *Epaminondas* had hitherto had some kind of security, was now, from the comparative number of the guns, as unprotected as if she had been quite upon the seventy-four's beam.

The effect of this unexpected fire had indeed been most severe. The main topmast was shot away a couple of feet above the cap; and four men killed, and nine wounded, were picked up from her decks, and sent below to the cockpit. Among the first of these was the gallant master; a shot struck him in the hollow of the back, and he had only time to stagger up to the captain as he came up to the quarter-deck, seize his hand—articulate “the ship”—and then expire. This was indeed a great calamity to the noble Howard. He looked down affectionately at the corpse of his late honoured shipmate, now lying an almost undistinguishable mass of blood at his feet; and then at the stern of the seventy-four. But he was not a

man to be easily put down ; passing his hand quickly across his forehead, as if to take a moment's thought, he said to the seamen who raised the master,—

“Lay him gently in my cabin, and throw a union jack over him. He was a gallant spirit, and has died gloriously at his duty. Now for the enemy.”

As the captain's words once more reverted to the seventy-four, he saw in an instant that the whole of her stern frame on the main-deck was shattered away, and there were her crew working the guns they had lately placed there, with little or nothing to prevent them from surging overboard—men, guns, and all—as the ship heavily mounted each succeeding sea. Behind these, a dull red glare, that made their forms and limbs distinctly visible from the contrast, plainly proved how extensive was the fire that had burst out on board, and how slight was their chance of extinguishing it ; while, every now and then, a lambent jet rose soaring, with

its forked tongue of flame, into the dark heavens, above the masts and poop of the line-of-battle ship; and though it was as repeatedly subdued, it seemed to rise the stronger from this its forced return to the source from whence it sprang.

“We have done for him, Gibbon,” said the captain: “unless she strikes, she is a lost ship! My men have nobly done their duty by me, and it is now my turn to do mine by them. I will never throw away a hair of their heads that I can help; and valour is idle without prudence. So, quarter-master, port your helm—sail-trimmers, to the larboard-braces. We’ll haul off, now Gibbon, and see the end of the play in peace, while you shift your shattered main topmast.”

The seventy-four, seeing the frigate haul to the wind on the larboard tack, the same as that on which they first beheld her, now redoubled their fire, but they did little or no harm; and in about ten minutes their shot howled harm-

less astern, or fell so wide of their mark as to excite but the jeers of those at whom they were aimed.

“Let the coxswain of the first and second cutters look to their boats, for we may want them, Mr. Gibbon. Secure the guns for the present, and get on with your topmast as fast as you can, while I go down to say a few words to the wounded.”—“My glorious shipmates, I am come to give my thanks to you—the night is ours,” said the captain, as he entered the gun-room of the frigate.

“Hurra!” faintly cheered two or three poor fellows, who, lying in various directions, faint with loss of blood and the anguish they were enduring, still felt all the pluck of British sailors revive at the sight of their captain, and the pleasing intelligence he bore. With a softness as remarkable now as the calm intrepidity that had hitherto distinguished his conduct, he went among the whole of his wounded, and addressed a few kind words to each. His steward, at the

beginning of the action, had received orders to spare nothing for the use of the surgeon; and now, all the most choice wines in the world were passing freely to those whose condition allowed the use of them. To one, Captain Howard gave some to drink; to another he handed water; a third he helped to place more easily on the chest or grating which supported him; and for all, his sympathy was as strongly shown as if they had been so many children or brothers.

There it was that victory exhibited the vulnerable side, and glory in the midst of its brightness discovered the depth of its shadows. On many a mind, burning with the torture of that hour, came the dear dreams of home and affection,—the wife—the little ones—the unprotected sister—the decrepit parents; and constantly to the lips would rise the doubly embittered question of, “What brought me here?”

Stretched along the steerage of the lower-deck, were lying some twenty human beings; most of them stripped to their waists, as

they had been struck down at their quarters—covered with blood—their white trousers saturated with gore—their heads, arms, or bodies, hastily swathed up in bandages, red with the vital fluid that slowly trickled to the deck, and stood either in frightful, half-coagulated patches, or ran in little rivulets to leeward, and there plashed by the adjoining bulkheads to the motion of the ship; some having, in downright rage and madness, fiercely turned loose the tourniquets upon their limbs, and, in utter contempt of life, allowed their tortured souls silently to ebb through their bloody wounds; while most of them, from their writhing and restlessness, had slackened their bandages, and added, by their hæmorrhage, to the frightful flooding of the place.

In vain the surgeon, my brother assistant, and myself, exerted ourselves to the utmost, assisted by the chaplain and the purser; we could not be everywhere at once; and though many a fine fellow bore his sufferings in silence,

still more gave way to the outrageous fierceness of temper for which such an hour affords too sad a palliation.

A little further forward, were laid in a melancholy heap—the dead! those who had been at once released from all further pain. Alas! the very beings who gave birth to them might have taken them for any object under heaven that wore a ruddy hue—a bundle of flags, or crimsoned rags—a mass of meat in the shambles of a victualling-yard—either, or all of these, they more resembled than human beings—the dread remains of man—the lord of the creation—the yet unconsumed victims offered up at the altar of national pride and wholesale error!

It was only as the eye, assisted by the dim glare of the fighting-lanterns, caught sight, here of a bloody mutilated hand thrust out from the revolting heap, and there, a bleached and long drained foot, which dazzled the sight with the fair whiteness of its long exhausted veins; with every now and then a ghastly face smeared with

gore ; in some places, deadly pale—in others, its dull filmy eyes fixed and staring in their sockets, and the whole expression of its countenance one of horror ;—it was only then that you began to feel you were looking at *your fellow-creatures!*

This—this, my young reader, is glory ; such as it frequently exists. As you go through life, it will be too often your fate to lift the silver veil from many a high-titled pretender, and discover the revolting and loathsome features of a Mokanna beneath it. But in this especial case it is to be hoped, that as reason and education advance, the minister who proposes an unjust and uncalled-for war, will find neither officers nor men to embark in it.*

* This was written five years ago, and therefore has no reference to the external relations of England at present, 1840 ; and since the matter has been much discussed, I shall take leave to say, that if ever war was justifiable and necessary, and deserving the support of a sensible and spirited people, the present war with China is of this description.

Such is the prayer philanthropy suggests. To this, how does knowledge of the world reply? That such a time will arrive, when Sesostris comes back from Egypt with the golden age in his pocket—when dungeons and gaols become coal-stores—where charcoal is prepared only for cleaning teeth—sulphur for making matches—and saltpetre has ceased to be a production of either nature or art. Then, when the disuse of gunpowder becomes as much a matter of history as its invention, and the secret of its manufacture as impenetrable as that of the Tyrian dye—then, when this happy age arrives, the use of the word glory will be consecrated to such as Alfred, in England; Wallace, in Scotland; and Washington, in America;—but not before.

CHAPTER V.

“ Fire on the main-deck,
Fire on the bow,
Fire on the gun-deck,
Fire down below.”

THE PIRATE.

THE wounded officers and seamen having now been attended to with as little delay as possible, the remains of the late main-topmast sent down upon deck, the new one hastily got up in its place, and the ship as much put to rights as the circumstances rendered possible, the Epaminondas was ready once more to stand towards the enemy. By this time, the fire on board the seventy-four, which still, apparently, was confined to the fore-part of the vessel, raged most fiercely. The long struggle which had

taken place as to whether its existence, or that of those it threatened, should be extinguished, seemed, as far as could be discovered by us, to have terminated, certainly, not in favour of our opponents.

The wind, which had rapidly abated, was still sweeping in strong gusts along the agitated sea. The moon had long since set; and the night had waned to that doubtful point of its empire, when the first faint blush of light glimmering in the east looked like the hectic tinge that overspreads the cheek of beauty, while yet its resistless destroyer is at a distance. Another half-hour, and day would break. Alas! with what bitter eagerness was the early beam of morning watched and prayed for on board that huge vessel! and yet, what would it have brought them but despair?

With their spars all wounded, and their rudder so damaged as to defy every attempt to restore its use, all their superior strength was idle against a foe that would not come

within their reach; or, at any rate, not sufficiently near to be much injured. Distant, again, as they were—namely, five days' sail—from Barbadoes, the nearest land, how could they survive through so long a space, in a ship that was rapidly verging to destruction with every passing second? Again; with such a sea, could they long expect to survive in their boats, even if these were capable of containing one half the number of unhappy beings who now crowded her decks in an agony of apprehension and despair?

As these thoughts passed through the minds of Captain Howard and his officers, they came to the conclusion, that, on the firing of another broadside at most, their opponent would surrender, that her people might be saved.

Once more the hollow drum rattled out its notes to quarters; the guns were again cast loose, and ready for action; and the frigate edged down towards her late antagonist, that with her sides riddled with shot, and blackened with smoke—her ports broken and splintered—

her stern completely destroyed—her ropes towing overboard in every direction—the wreck of her fallen mizen-mast not yet cleared away from her quarter—her rudder wholly beyond command, and with only a few spars, and no sails to direct her course, still drove on before the gale, the very picture of ruin and desolation—the very reverse of all that associates itself in the mind with the mention of a man-of-war.

How different was the state of the English frigate! With the exception of the marks left in her broad white band by the enemy's cannon, and the smoke of her own guns, it would have been difficult to see that she was not just out of port, with her main-topgallant mast sent down upon deck for repairs. Every rope was taut in its place, with as much exactitude as if she had been sailing into Spithead; every sail damaged in the late encounter had been replaced; and now, with tompions out, and double-shotted guns that waited but the match, she stood down towards the enemy under close-

reefed topsails, jib, and driver, as imperturbably as a philosopher may be supposed to approach a man in a passion.

“Gibbon!” said the captain, who was seated on the weather-hammock-netting, conning the ship himself.

“Sir!”

“Come here.”

The first lieutenant, who had been standing at the lee-gangway watching the burning seventy-four, approached his superior.

“I think we begin to draw within long-shot again,” said the latter, looking at the enemy; “and, considering that that big fellow is in so helpless a condition, it would be a cruel show of strength that has now been so severely proved, if we were to give him any more iron. What say you? May we venture to run within arm’s length of him, and trust to his good sense in striking, and allowing us to save his crew?”

On hearing this, the first lieutenant looked at

the enemy, then at his captain, and then at the enemy again. After a pause of some minutes he replied,

“ That would certainly be acting the generous part, though we ought to be generous to our own men first, sir. That pretty open-work stern of his is mounted at present, you will remember, with five thirty-four pounders, that knocked up thirteen of our men at one fire. It’s a confounded awkward shot for a frigate to deal with, and if he wished to strike without firing, he could do it at once.”

“ Very well, then, take a good elevation, and open on him without delay.”

With a quickness that followed this order in a manner perfectly ridiculous, a fire certainly was opened, almost at the moment the captain was uttering the words, though not by the frigate. The already luminous and fast increasing blaze to leeward was for a second put into comparative shade, by the vivid flash that, like the wand of Aaron, swallowed up its rival ;

while the dotted streaks of foam, advancing like lines of lightning on the frigate, followed by the heavy boom of artillery, struggling up against the wind, announced the re-commencement of the seventy-four's hostilities. Flash for flash was, however, given back, and while the enemy's projectiles dropped harmlessly round the sides of the *Epaminondas*, the lighter metal of the latter was inadequate even so far to approach her foe. Her men, however, determined to show that they were more masters of the art than their opponent, rattled broadside after broadside to leeward, giving them at least two for their one: while there was their obdurate enemy drifting away, for it could scarcely be called sailing, a perfect pyre of curling flame and smoke forward, and the cannon blazing from her stern in all the impotent wrath of disappointed and irrepressible fury.

By the glasses, which were now busily employed in watching the foe, her foremast, which had long been in flames, was seen sud-

denly to roll over her bows, a perfect mass of fire, which spread at length up the rigging of her mainmast; this, too, was added to the devouring element, and for the brief space which ensued till its fall, she resembled some terrible pyramid of combustion floating on the sea.

As the spars, however, began to consume, long streams of flame floated away upon the gale, like ribbons of fine silk. No intermission in the use of her impotent artillery took place: fiercely and outrageously as ever flash after flash issued from the stern, and spake the desperate resolution of some proud heart, to court destruction rather than surrender.

“This is idle, Mr. Gibbon,” said the captain, after some minutes harmless waste of powder on both sides—“cease firing; if they prefer to go to the bottom rather than to Barbadoes, all I can wish them is a pleasant voyage, with a climate not quite so hot. Fools! I suppose that the idea of a seventy-

four striking to a frigate is insupportable to the ‘great nation;’ as if they could have avoided the accident of being caught in half a gale of wind, with a heavy sea running, they in a ship evidently overloaded, and, from its size, not so good a sea-boat as a frigate. However, we’ll fling away no more ammunition on a killed bird. Though I’m sorry for the crew, yet I must say, whoever that fellow is in command, his pluck would have done no discredit to an Englishman; and if that isn’t paying a man a modest compliment, I don’t know what is.”

“He’s fought his ship to the last, certainly, Captain Howard; we must say that; but I could wish that he had shown some colours: we could not have failed to distinguish them *now*, if any had been hoisted.”

“Never mind, Gibbon, though he’s shown no colours, he’s hung out plenty of lights. What do we care about his colours? there’s red, yellow, and black in abundance, if none

other. All we wish to know is, that they're not English."

"Well, sir, I'm rather staggered at the way that ship's fought to the last. There are not many men in the French navy who would have done so. I've taken Jean at all hazards, from close quarters, cross cutlasses, and cutting out, to long shots and red-hot-ball battery work; but I never found, if you gave him a decent reason for striking his flag, that Jean would be over rash in refusing to do so. I declare, if I thought that any unlucky mistake had led us to fire upon our fellow-countrymen, in the way we've been working those poor fellows to leeward, I should never know a happy hour again, sir."

"Then make your heart quite light on that score: I should not be less distressed than yourself; but I would stake my life upon the cast, that yonder is no part of the British navy. In the first place, we never fit two-deckers with bombs."

“No, sir, but such a thing might have happened for any particular service, or at the express wish of her captain.”

“Well—it’s just possible; but then, look at the slovenly state in which she allowed the wreck of her spars and rigging to hang about her and tow overboard, without attempting to clear it away while we were refitting.”

“Then consider, on the other hand, sir, that she was on fire.”

“But even that would not, in our navy, have been allowed to absorb all attention.”

“Faith, sir, I don’t know: I’ve seen terrific confusion in our navy consequent on that very cause.”

“Well, even granting that, I do not think she was handled like an English ship when we first gained upon her. There was a degree of indifference, almost unwillingness, to engage, which could only have arisen from some unusual orders to her captain, and which, you know as well as I, are never given in our navy, or

if given are never obeyed. Now are you satisfied, Mr. Gibbon?"

"I hope so, sir," replied Gibbon, in a tone of deep earnestness, which did not by any means imply the fact; and shaking his head with a sad seriousness of manner, he took a glass and went up to the fore top-mast head, to scrutinise the burning vessel more minutely.

The conversation which had just passed, and the doubts which Gibbon seemed to entertain, had not less surprised than distressed the captain. For some minutes after the former had left him and gone aloft with the spy-glass, he continued to eye the seventy-four with still more intense interest, if possible, than before. Still the fatal element that consumed her gained ground with every moment of time that passed—every fresh gust of the gale that hurried over her.

Her mainmast, which had long been tottering, unable any more to withstand the heavy

and repeated rolling of the hull, soon followed the foremast in its fall, but unluckily not overboard; for as the seventy-four descended into the trough of a deep sea, it snapped short off by the deck, and coming down on the star-board bow, presented, of course, its fiery barrier on the gangway. The flames now began to show themselves out of the bow-ports of the main-deck, and the rapidly heating guns to explode without either aim or object, sending their idle shot before them to the bottom of that dread abyss towards which they must themselves, and—to every appearance—with all the crew, shortly follow.

Still, however, from the stern, one of the thirty-four's was fired every now and then, as if to show resistance to the death. It was indeed a melancholy and an awful spectacle to witness, and little cheered by the reflection that in that mass of fire were some thousand human beings, doomed to be offered up, in all probability, as a hecatomb to the mistaken pride of one

unhappy man, who strove when further strife was useless, except for the extinction of life ; and who, not content with having already done his utmost, still continued to struggle for a shadow, which, if obtained, would be utterly valueless.

Heart-sick, and half repentant of his victory, poor Howard turned away, and walked forward.

“ Fore topmast-head there ! what do you make out on board the enemy ? ”

“ A number of her people, sir, crowded together on her poop, and, I think, *fighting*.”

“ Look again ! ”

“ Yes, sir, they are : one party are struggling to hoist the colours, and the other to prevent them. The former seem to have got possession of the halyards—no—they have lost it—now they have got it again, and up goes the bunting.”

“ See, see, then—what are the colours ? ”

“ I can only see yet that the flag looks dark, sir. It’s not hoisted more than a few feet, and the other party are endeavouring to wrest it out of their hands. O damn it !—and they’ve done it too !” cried Gibbon, in the height of his distress, stamping on the cross-tree, and waving his hand as if about to dash the glass into the sea.

“ Look again, Gibbon,” cried the captain from just below him, for with the swiftness of a topman he had run up the rigging, and was now within a few feet of his lieutenant.

“ O, sir, we’ve lost the day on board there !” said the latter in despair. “ The colours are cut down, and I can see their party being driven from the poop—there they go, sir, over the poop railing. I can see cutlasses gleaming in the firelight as plain as ever I saw anything in my life. Some dreadful mystery hangs over her—what can be the meaning of it ?”

“Let me have the glass,” said Captain Howard, who now stood beside Gibbon. After a long and anxious survey, he looked at his brother officer’s face, as if to see what was passing in his mind, and remained silent.

“What if that should have been a British ship, Captain Howard, and the men have mutinied and got possession? This would account for a great deal that now puzzles us. And so, rather than show a flag and be taken, they choose to go down, and take every living creature to perdition.”

“In God’s name I hope not,” said Howard; and as the supposition was mentioned, the perspiration started on his forehead, at reflecting how dreadful must have been the havoc! and he resumed his gaze with the glass once more.

“As I live, Gibbon, they’re jumping overboard.”

“Then depend on it, sir, the fire has reached the magazine at last.”

“ As I’m a Howard, there are *women* too jumping overboard, and I can plainly distinguish several in groups on the poop !”

“ Passengers most likely, sir.

“ Be that as it may, were the devil himself on board, I’d bear up and try what could be done to save them—and I’ll not do less now. Be they French, English, or what not, we’ll show those drunken rascals a manœuvre yet. Drifting as she is a wreck before the wind, she can’t be making much way; so as they still keep up that idle firing at the stern, we’ll edge down and get ahead in their course to leeward. The flames have got hold of her forward too hotly to let them annoy us with their guns from there; and by this we may be enabled to save some of her crew.”

“ Do you think the boats will live, sir, in this sea ?”

“ I hope so, for it must be tried: go you to the wheel, run down out of shot abeam of the enemy, then haul to the wind and stand on

again, so as to place the ship about a quarter of a mile ahead of the seventy-four, while I remain aloft here to watch what happens next."

On receiving these orders, the lieutenant quickly descended to the deck. The close-reefed foresail was set on the frigate as she fell off before the wind, and, with the beautiful motion of a seabird just rising from the waves, she seemed to skim along its surface with all the lightness which we frequently observe in those winged denizens of the deep, while, with their feet still trailing in the water, they leave a bright line of foam upon its surface.

Meanwhile, in profound grief and sorrow, the noble-hearted Howard was watching the burning wreck while he passed it on his lee-beam; a gun every now and then discharging itself from forward, as the fire heated it to the point of explosion, accompanied by the more regular discharge of a few shot which her inveterate crew aimed from their

after-quarters, without in the least degree either benefiting themselves or injuring their enemy.

Still the fierce element gained upon its prey, and slowly worked its way to windward, from the bow to the stern ; for had it commenced in the latter portion of the vessel instead of the former, her existence had not been protracted to half the time that had now elapsed since its origin. There, like the blast of a furnace that has overshot its vent, it tapered away to leeward, dancing, as it were, in its maddening and destroying mirth, around the bowsprit, and spurting, like jets of some bright liquid, from the ports. Those on the main-deck had been closed, to exclude as much as possible unnecessary air ; but wherever the guns within had been discharged by the heat of the fire, the port had of course been greatly shattered or altogether blown away, and here the flames burst out altogether uncontrolled ; while in other places they were to be seen, working their course through the topsides, like water through

the crevices of dam-gates, temporarily extinguished every few minutes by the deluge of spray which dashed over the wreck, only to reappear with greater fury.

On the lower-deck the same appearance was exhibited, but in a less degree ; for being more exposed to the water, not only from without, but also from the scuppers within, this circumstance had greatly tended to prolong the struggle which her determined crew had made, against the numerous enemies that beset them—fire, water, air, and fellow-men.

Still the first would not release its hold, and, as if determined in this fair field of fight to prove its superiority over all its brother combatants, it fastened with unremitting fierceness upon all that was assailable within ; while, by necessity, it left the seemingly fair exterior to the demolition of the tempest. With fast flying minutes, the captain now beheld numbers of the crew, in the utter bewilderment of fear, casting themselves into the wild foam of

waters, choosing rather to trust their lives to the support of some floating piece of timber, and the chance of the frigate picking them up, than to remain longer on that floating and guideless mass of carnage, conflagration, and dismay.

But, alas ! like too many of those choices which are forced upon us by our evil destinies in moments when misfortune leaves not reason the power to discriminate, they only left that which was a frightful fate, for one, if possible, more hideous : since whatever might be the horrors of being blown up, surely they could not be so aggravated or prolonged as those which would await sufferers floating in such a sea on a mere straw, suffering the worst pangs of drowning by constant submersion in the water, and yet doomed, before the quiet of a grave should bless them, to know every alternation of hope and despair that can rack and rend the human heart.

CHAPTER VI.

“ ’Tis he ! Well met in any hour,
Lost Leila’s love ! Accursed ! —— ”

THE GIAOUR.

IN the course of twenty minutes from the giving of the last order to the first lieutenant, the Epaminondas had run over a space of something more than four miles, and, hauling up her foresail, hove to under her three topsails, some five or six hundred yards ahead of the seventy-four.

Although the effort was as idle as anything could well be, the captain hailed her, both in French and English, to know if she had struck. But with such a gale of wind blowing in his

teeth, the chances were a thousand to one that a single word ever reached the ears for which it was intended. Another disadvantage of our position was, that the whole smoke of the burning line-of-battle ship came rolling down upon us in dense black volumes, and quite obscured the view we had formerly possessed of her proceedings. The burning sparks, which occasionally fell in showers, were all blown towards us; but they had not the power to harm; for, long before they had travelled so far, they had fallen into the water and been extinguished for ever—sad emblems of the gallant ship of which they were particles.

Finding, however, that in case the seventy-four's magazine had not been effectually flooded, and that she herself should unexpectedly blow up, the frigate might not then be equally safe, way was once more got upon the *Epaminondas*, and a better position for observation taken up on the larboard bow of the wreck.

Still no sign of her surrender could be dis-

covered. Her people yet continued to throw themselves overboard from the quarters and the after-ports, in groups of ten and twenty at a time—men and women: while there were we, unable to assist, or even to lie in our present position, without the enemy attempting, in impotent rage, to hit us with the after-guns of the main-deck, which, however, could not be trained so far forward as to strike even our stern.

Never was seen human being more distressed at witnessing anguish that he could not alleviate, than Captain Howard. At last a female, with two infants clinging to her breasts, was seen to leap overboard into the pitiless sea, while several more were crowded on the deck from whence she sprang.

“By heaven! Gibbon, I can bear this no longer! We must try to do something for those poor helpless creatures; at any rate *they* have nothing to do with the butcheries of war, except to suffer from them. Lower one

of the quarter-boats, since they are the largest we have capable of swimming: we must hope it will be able to live. Call a volunteer crew, and put in one of the assistant surgeons; else, even if they are lucky enough to pick some of those poor women out of the water, they may never live to get on board."

No sooner had the captain mentioned a volunteer crew, than almost every man within hearing, and fifty times as many as could possibly be employed, rushed forward to offer their services. To these I immediately added mine as the assistant surgeon, and we were all soon seated in the boat, under the command of the senior lieutenant, and pulling towards the flaming hull of our enemy.

It was, I must confess, not less the grandeur of the scene I was about to witness, than a sense of duty and a wish to be useful, which had led me to volunteer for this dangerous service. But though I was prepared, therefore, for something that should stir deeply

“the soul’s secret springs,” yet I had not the least idea of anything so awfully terrible as the tossing on those tremendous billows. The first impression was one of unmitigated dread and horror, that came upon the heart with a convulsive energy, and I bitterly reproached my temerity in seeking such a situation.

The frigate, receding from our view with surprising quickness, seemed shrunk into a pitiful sea-boat on the crests of those gigantic waves ; swallowed up between which every few minutes, the mind at once resigned all hope of ever treading her deck again in safety. Ere long, however, becoming more accustomed to the threatening dangers, and perceiving that we still survived, the mind awoke to what were in reality the surrounding beauties of our position.

Lulled in a sudden calm whenever our boat descended into the vast hollows of the seas, the gale still roared fitfully and strong upon their crazy summits ; nor could I have ima-

gined, until now crossing over it in a boat, the distance which intervened between the Epaminondas and the seventy-four. As we drew near the latter, the lieutenant remarked,

“They will hardly fire upon us, I suppose, however angry the good folks may be aboard. Though what use we are to prove, I know not—I can see no one to pick up.”

“Please your honour,” quoth the coxswain, “they’re jumping overboard faster than ever now ; and there’s one fellow, at any rate, who’s just made a dive of it, whom I think I see clinging to a piece of the wreck. Look, sir, there, as it is lifted on the top of the wave, and comes in against that streak of light where the day is just beginning to break.”

“Where?”

“Just there, sir, on our quarter. Wait a moment—it’s sunk down again into the trough of the sea : it’ll rise presently—there, sir—there—it’s coming up again ; now don’t you see his head, sir?”

“Yes, I do—give way, my lads; if we pull straight on as we’re going, you and the coxswain, Mr. O’Donnel, will be able to get the poor fellow on board,” addressing me. “Be nimble, remember; and when once you get hold, don’t let him go again.”

“No, sir,” said I; but it was no easy matter in that tremendous sea to guide the boat hither and thither, and that without upsetting her. Every few seconds, amid the howling of the wind, a long deep startling cry of agony would reach us from some of the unhappy wretches who had committed themselves to the mercies of the ocean. Of these, we could just catch a fearful glance, as they lay wildly struggling for a few brief seconds on the summit of the wave; we then beheld them sucked rapidly down into the intermediate abyss: and when the next swollen tumulus of waters rose, not a trace of anything but idle foam was visible upon it.

As a solitary exception, the swimmer, for

whom we were now pulling still maintained his hold upon a floating piece of mast, assisted in his determined resistance against death by the remains of the top, which, sheltered in a great degree from the violence of the water, enabled him to bear up till we approached. Even now, however, the act of saving him was one of no slight danger, when a single collision with the floating timber might send us all to the bottom. The coxswain, therefore, and myself prepared to take him on board, while the lieutenant steering, brought the wreck upon the larboard quarter of the boat.

After two or three efforts, we approached so near, that the coxswain extending his arm to the floating seaman, the latter grasped it, relinquished his hold upon the mast, and endeavoured to get alongside. The boat was at this moment on the summit of the wave.

“Quick ! quick !” cried the coxswain, holding on the gunwale of the boat with one hand, while the other was outstretched to save the

stranger. "Quick ! before the sea parts us !" for the boat was beginning to go down on one side of the wave, and the man on the other; and it would else be necessary, in order to his safety, to drag him through the whole immense intervening mass of water.

Whether the fellow understood the cry, could not be known, nor can I undertake to say, since my attention was more powerfully arrested by the danger of the coxswain himself, who sang out,

"Hold me on, sir, or he'll drag me over-board—hold me on, Mr. O'Donnel."

At this moment, the strange seaman's face was just visible to me ; I caught his eye in a moment, and my whole attention was fixed on that, while I laid my hand on the coxswain's collar to secure his safety. While thus looking on, in the eager hope of seeing him drag the strange seaman safe on board—breathless—speechless—in the emotion his appearance had excited in my bosom, a light, clear and vivid

as the blaze of noon, played on his hideous, hateful countenance, and showed me, almost within my grasp, the wretched murdering villain, Donaghue.

“Hold—hold him, coxswain,” I cried in a tone of frenzy, “it is he;”—but as I spoke, I saw him fix his baleful and designing eyes on mine, and with a smile of triumph—as if in the very hour of death he could joy in defeating my only hope in life—he let go the coxswain’s hand—the billows closed above his head, and he sank down into the deep vale of interposing waters, without the possibility of recovering him.

So great was the shock of this wretch’s sudden showing and disappearance, that I knew not what either my actions or my words might have been. The lieutenant told me afterwards, that I attempted to leap into the sea after him. All that I remember is the shooting of a mass of fire, like some huge volcano, to the sky, and then a sudden roar, beside which even the voice of the elements was for a moment hushed.

This, in some measure, recalled me to myself. The flaming wreck against which we had so long combated, had at length blown up; nor were we able to save even one of the many hundreds of beings who so lately reposed in it in safety and in hope.

In vain I urged the lieutenant, with the most impassioned appeals that the excitement of the moment suggested, to turn back and renew the search for Donaghue. He insisted that my asking for anything of the sort was mere raving, and that not only he, but every other soul so lately on board that large vessel, must some moments since have ceased to exist. He did, it is true, attempt to question me as to who the object of my search might be, and if of any importance.

What mattered such idle curiosity to me? To myself, his existence was of the most vital importance; but at such a moment could I discuss such a secret with a mere stranger and official? The thing was impossible; so, in the

first moments of excited disappointment and despair, I threw myself down in the bottom of the boat, almost praying that before we reached the ship I too might be added to the victims of that dreadful night.

CHAPTER VII.

“How soon a word at random spoken,
May wound or soothe a heart that’s broken!”

For some minutes after regaining the deck of the frigate, I felt so agitated that I knew not what to do. The sudden apparition of the detested face I had so unexpectedly beheld, could not, I truly believe, have more affected me, had I actually seen it rise from the grave. In addition to all the circumstances of horror which accompanied its presentment, were the thousand terrible associations that were in-

dissolubly bound up with it. Those who are conversant with the workings of the human passions, will remember how powerfully all their most vivid emotions have been called into play, at the mere casual encounter of aught that could serve as a connecting link between themselves and one to whom their affections have been given—how, with an electricity of feeling, we suddenly and involuntarily cling to one, who, however indifferent to us before, yet, if associated with past scenes of happiness, seems by his mere presence to strengthen and renew the chain with which devotion bound us. For a moment, we almost doubt that we are again to see the absent and beloved ! These, then, may conceive what must have been the shock I had sustained, coming as it did on one, the whole end, scope, and object of whose life was to discover this very villain, whom I knew to hold the secret of Kathleen's disappearance—who, I was sadly forced to acknowledge to my own heart, was her murderer.

No—I give up the attempt; no words can do justice to the struggle thus awakened within me. In a frenzy of despair, rage, and grief, I stood almost senseless on the quarter-deck of the frigate, which I know not how I had regained; now accusing myself for not having grasped the wretch beyond the power of escape—I, who never had the opportunity of grasping him at all—now cursing the folly of the coxswain—the obstinacy of the lieutenant, who would not turn back to seek him. Again hope painted to me the possibility of his still surviving on the floating mast, and being picked up when the gale moderated, either by ourselves or some other passer by; and lastly, despair urged me to believe in the inevitability of his death, and the utter loss of the only clue by which I could ever hope to unravel my lost Kathleen's assassination.

Then, with a feeling amounting to impiety, I asked of Heaven how I had been so criminal, or so unhappy, as to call down upon her and upon

myself—upon her family and my own—the sad deluge of misfortunes that had been rained upon our ill-fated attachment.

In the midst of this turmoil of the mind, the captain sent for me to his cabin, the bulk-head of which had been temporarily put up, as soon as it was ascertained that the condition of the seventy-four rendered further resistance impossible. When he saw me come in, he looked at me stedfastly for a moment, and perceiving the agitation under which I suffered, kindly extended his hand, and made me sit down beside him on the case of the rudder-head.

“What is this which Lieutenant Atkins has told me, Mr. O'Donnel?” said he, after a slight pause. “It seems, by the going down of that unhappy ship, you have lost some friend or acquaintance whom you recognised. If so, I am sorry that the duties of the service compel me to intrude on you at such a moment; but I too have my suffering from the unhappy

catastrophe we have all witnessed ; and as, from your being acquainted with one of her crew, the chances are that he was a fellow-countryman, this supposition does not afford me any extra consolation, but, on the contrary, impels me to ask, who and what he might have been, and what you knew of him !”

With any one else, these questions would have worn the character of prying impertinence, and I should have resented them accordingly ; but Captain Howard’s manly nature was, I knew, the last to harbour such motives ; and though to speak of the past to one in no way interested in it was to me the extreme of agony, I determined to make the effort.

“ Believe me, Captain Howard, I feel deeply—”

But here the agony of those remembrances which came fast and thick upon me choked all further utterance. I could say no more—

and rising from his side, I walked up and down his cabin in a silent paroxysm of grief.

“Don’t distress yourself, Mr. O’Donnel, at making me a confidant—I will be a faithful depository of any secret you may confide.”

“I believe it, sir,” said I, as soon as I was sufficiently master of myself to speak. “The man I recognised was neither friend nor acquaintance, but a wretched villain, who, there is every reason to believe, was the murderer of one of my dearest friends.”

“Where?”

“In Ireland, sir.”

“Was he an Irishman, then?”

“He was—and disappeared with his daughter at the same time that his victim was carried by armed ruffians from her home, as it was supposed, at the instigation of a relative. This is all, Captain Howard, on which you can at all speculate. The particulars involve much private and family misery for me, which,

should you wish to know, I may at some future period be able to communicate. How the villain could have been on board that ship, I know not ; nor could anything be more disastrous to me than his getting away : for I feel as fully convinced that the act of his death, if he is dead, was voluntary, as that I stand before you. I did all I could to urge Lieutenant Atkins, after the seventy-four blew up, to turn back and see if he was not still clinging to the wreck of her mast ; for a more desperate and determined ruffian does not exist ; but Mr. Atkins scouted the idea."

"Well, Mr. O'Donnel, you must admit it was not very probable. However, as day has now dawned, we will remain as near the spot as possible, to see if he can be discovered with the stronger light of the morning. I am deeply sorry the scoundrel has escaped us, since his capture would have cleared up any family sorrow under which you may be unfortunate enough to labour. But I suppose that

a consciousness of his guilt made him prefer drowning, to death by the executioner. I do not ask for any further revelation of the private history connected with this matter, since you feel it to be at present so painful. Should you ever decide otherwise, I can only say, I shall be most happy not merely to give it a patient hearing, but to receive your confidence with pleasure, and to lend you every assistance in my power."

As the captain said this, he extended his hand, which I took, and, thanking him for his sympathy, withdrew. Although, as Captain Howard had promised, the frigate remained on the spot till nearly nine o'clock A. M., not a vestige of the wreck of the late line-of-battle-ship could be discovered. In fact, nothing is more difficult than for a ship at sea to remain continuously on one particular circle of water, without landmark of any sort or kind to guide her; and even had we been so fortunate as to succeed in this endeavour, still more arduous

would have been the effort, in such a sea as the subsiding wind still left, to discover a comparatively small object like the mast of our destroyed foe.

The intervening time, therefore, having been devoted to refitting the ship, the Epaminondas at ten o'clock resumed her course for Barbadoes, the land of which island was in a few days announced from the mast-head. I had of course, from the reports of my more experienced messmates, expected to behold a scene of much beauty, and for once my expectations were more than realised.

The day was one of the finest I think I ever witnessed; and in that clear climate, the effect produced by the intense blue of the cloudy sky reflected in the clear waters of the bay—the lands sloping down to meet the sea, and crowned with the feathery foliage of the palm, the coconut, and other children of the tropics—produced an effect the most enchanting that could be conceived. It was not quite seven in the

morning when we dropped our anchor, and a crowd of boats had, for the last half mile, surrounded, as if to welcome, the gallant frigate to her station. The sun was shining with intense brightness, giving beauty to all it touched, and yet not so hot as to prove in the least degree annoying. The sails were speedily furled and the awning spread, and when I looked down at all the lovely fruits borne by the boats swarming alongside, I could much more readily have believed myself voyaging in some splendid yacht, than simply serving his majesty, in a climate where life, too often, is not worth ten days' purchase, and the yellow fever is the terror of the land.

The day before the island was descried from the masthead, I had risen early. The decks had just been washed down, and were scarcely dry; and I had been standing in the main-chains to windward, contemplating the glorious scene of sea and sky as the young sun rose gloriously through the latter, and seemed to pierce down

into the fathomless depths below. While in the height of my reverie, I felt some one touch me on the shoulder, and turning round, beheld Captain Howard.

With his usual good-nature he asked me what my thoughts might be; and I frankly answered, that they had been busy with the splendid scene before me, and had thence wandered to the contrast of that awful night of our late engagement. Finally, one subject of conversation leading to another, he questioned me as to whether I had yet been able to resolve on entrusting him with the whole story relating to Donaghue. Seeing no absolute good that could result to any of the parties for whom I was interested, in my further silence, but, on the other hand, the probability, by disclosure, of acquiring a powerful friend in the prosecution of that inquiry which I had determined never to relinquish, I replied, that I had no objection to communicate to him every particular, but that

he must be prepared for a long, as well as a sad story.

“If that be the case, then,” he replied, “you shall tell it me at breakfast, which will soon be ready.”

On hearing the whole details of that melancholy narrative with which the reader is already acquainted, my friendly superior expressed much surprise, grief, and indignation; nor could he, after mature deliberation, come to any conclusion different from my own, as to the guilty actors in the crime. He asked, if I had ever since heard from my father: to which I answered, and truly, that so far from such being the case, I was in utter ignorance as to his present residence, or even whether he still lived. My only correspondent in that beloved country from whence my own sorrows and the crimes of others had driven me into a cruel banishment, was the eldest of Kathleen's brothers; and as I had never mentioned my father's name in any

letter to him, so, in the few which he had written to me, a similar silence had been observed.

“ I do not wonder at that,” said Captain Howard. “ Stranger as I am, I cannot but shudder at the tale; and my only wonder is, at the strength with which Heaven kindly endows the human mind, to undergo sorrow and suffering which we should otherwise deem to be beyond man’s endurance. Of one thing I only entreat you to rest assured,—my utmost sympathy, as well as my warmest friendship and assistance, in any way you can point out. Though, should you to-morrow be able to gain the right clue to all that now seems so mysterious, what would it avail you? Suppose the facts should be—and I cannot see how they should be otherwise—what we imagine to be the case—can you proceed to do justice on this unhappy lady’s betrayers, even though they are steeped in her blood to the very lips?—impossible !”

“ It is, sir ; but you forget that this one important point will be gained,—I shall learn, if

we are wrong in our suspicions, to do justice to one whom these suspicions have greatly injured; and if we are right, I shall have the terrible but just conviction to support me in the course I have taken. Doubt and suspense will then be at an end."

"True; and if you gain nothing more, that will amply repay all the sorrows which such an end may cost you to obtain; though it should be by the destruction of every hope. Still, to recur to the first point which made me inquire into this painful history, how, in the name of everything that is strange, are we to account for this man's appearance on board that seventy-four?"

"It cannot be accounted for, sir. It is one of those unconnected, incomprehensible facts that arrest and perplex our judgments in every passage of our lives. We might get up fifty theories to account for the fact, and yet be as far as ever from the right solution of the mystery, which is, I admit, inexplicable."

“It is indeed ; neither do I see that, from this isolated fact, we can draw an inference that she belonged to any one country rather than another.”

“No, sir ; certainly not.”

“So that, with all our painful research, we stand just where we were. All that we can do is to look for some corroborative testimony, in one way or other : though, whether this will turn up, depends not upon us. But, at any rate, whether you are in my ship or not when such comes to hand, never forget that in me you have one most warmly interested both in the truth and you.”

The day after this conversation, as I have already said, we arrived at Barbadoes. Sir Alexander Cochrane had left the island, with his squadron, some days before ; and two sloops, with commanders in them, were the only men-of-war then lying there. The *Epaminondas* consequently becoming the senior ship, there was no one to whom it became necessary for

Captain Howard to report himself. Having determined to send on shore the wounded, and proceed to Martinique as quickly as the necessary repairs would permit, he sent for me on the quarter-deck, and, in the presence of the surgeon, expressed his wish that I should take the sick and wounded on shore, and, if Caustic could spare me, remain there till we sailed.

Caustic, who never was known to fling any sort of impediment in the path of another's harmless gratification, immediately gave his hearty assent, and by eleven o'clock I was transferred to the shore. Very few of our cases had, in proportion, done badly, and only one proved fatal; so we had reason to be very thankful.

With the same generous feeling of promoting the happiness of all under him, Captain Howard ordered leave to be given to every officer in the ship, whenever the first lieutenant could spare the services of each, and the duty of refitting her was brought to a close. To the men, also, the

same indulgence was extended ; and a happier ship's crew it is scarcely possible to conceive.

We had also an opportunity of judging this, by the powerful proof of contrast ; since the two sloops were commanded by men who seemed to vie with each other in making their vessels come as near floating prisons as possible. It is true, neither of them had ever distinguished himself in the service ; but at sea, the cat-o'-nine tails was constantly going, yet the work of the ship was most ill performed : while in harbour, men were constantly drunk, deserting, and jumping overboard, to such an extent, that calculation was made proving that the two vessels were feeding the sharks at an average of three men a week.

The news of our rencontre with the mysterious seventy-four was soon bruited about, and exaggerated as usual, till one day I happened to be asked when the inhabitants might expect the arrival of that line-of-battle ship which we had captured and put a prize-crew on board.

The dinners and parties made for us followed one another in daily succession ; and had we felt inclined, I am sure we might have had fourteen set dinners in the week ; while, to my feeling, even the hospitality of old Ireland was nearly eclipsed by that of the Barbadians.

The first evening of our arrival, however, gave rise to an adventure in which I was implicated without either wish or intention ; and as it threatened, at one time, to prove most serious in its results, I will merely relate how it occurred. One of the principal inhabitants of the island happening to give a large dinner-party on the day of our coming, at once called on Captain Howard, and expressed the happiness it would give him and his friends to see at his table the chief and gallant juniors of the *Epaminondas*. The captain, to whom nothing of this sort came amiss, frankly gave his assent, and, at the jovial hour, took with him as bright and large-a staff, as he said while he mustered us, as any man need go into action with.

We formed a perfect constellation of blue and gold ; and having brought ourselves to an anchor, we soon opened fire.

Nothing could be more delightful than the dinner, unless it was the dance that succeeded it ; and no one of the party seemed more to enjoy either than did the gallant, the accomplished Captain Howard. One there was, however, who seemed perfectly to sympathize with the exultation of the gallant captain ; and who, dance after dance, testified this sympathy in the most undoubted manner.

This lady was the fascinating wife of the gallant Major F —, who now, for the last three hours, had been sedulously pursuing his game of whist, to all appearance perfectly indifferent whether his wife flirted or danced, or danced and flirted, or simply danced without flirting, or flirted without dancing. As long as it did not prevent his making his point, it seemed all one and the same to him.

Now the said Mrs. F—— was, what every

one would have termed, an uncommonly fine woman. She was very tall, very dark, and very luxuriantly formed. She had a beautiful bust and throat, of both of which she was particularly generous and charitable in the display; she had also a profusion of long dark hair, and a pair of very large dark eyes, the use of which she seemed perfectly to understand. But still, there could be no sort of harm in dancing with her; and this, accordingly, Captain Howard did till three o'clock in the morning; he then went to his lodgings, which were at a friend's house, and my brother officers returned to their ship.

This sort of thing went on for three days; we were only to remain four more, and for every one of these all hands were full of engagements. Nothing could be more delightful; and, after our late hot work at sea, it proved quite "refreshing."

One morning—the fourth after our arrival—Caustic came ashore, as usual, to go round the

wards of the wounded with me; and we had one of the maintop men under our hands, who had been severely hurt near the shoulder.

“Please your honour,” said the man, “I want to know if I mayn’t be allowed a little more physic?”

“A little more what, sir?” demanded Caustic.

“A little more physic, sir.”

“By gosh, Mr. O’Donnel, I’ve been at sea some twenty years, and never had such a request as that made to me before. What puts that in your head, my man?”

“Why, your honour, the physic here is of a better sort than we get aboard, so I should like to have a full dose of it before we start to sea; for, as the captain’s a right sort of officer, no doubt some of us will be losing the number of our messes before we come back again.”

“What medicine are you taking?”

“Half-a-pint of that stuff twice a day, sir.”

Pointing to a cooling kind of fever-draught, like lemonade.

“Half-a-pint!” quoth Caustic, “why, that’s more than I ordered you.”

“Yes, sir,” said I, “this man and some others asked me, yesterday, after you were gone, for a larger dose; so, being an immaterial matter, I gave it.”

“Oh, very well! give him half as much more.”

The next made the same request, and the next again. In short, all wanted more physic.

“Cursed odd!” said Caustic, as we left the ward; “never heard of such a thing! They’re playing us some trick, Mr. O’Donnel; send it to them, however, and be here to meet me half an hour after they get it;” and off went Caustic.

Scarcely had he departed, when in came Captain Howard.

“How are the sick going on, O’Donnel?”

“Oh, very well, sir! The surgeon is just gone to call on you with the report.”

“Is he?—very good! Then, before he returns, I have a word to say to you;” and, with

a smile of some meaning, he closed the door. "Now, Mr. O'Donnel, what I have to say to you is in confidence. Caustic is a good fellow—an excellent fellow—and a very clever surgeon—a man for whom I have an infinitude of respect; but you are aware he is so exceedingly eccentric, that I hardly know how to answer for him in every position. But listen to me. There is a lady in Barbadoes who has a child very ill. She has employed, she tells me, all the medical men in the place, who seem unable to do it much good; and, as the child's illness is said to arise from scrofula, she has taken a violent fancy for a naval medical man. Now, I want you to go and see the child."

"But, sir," said I, "you do the poor little sufferer a cruel injustice in sending me instead of Dr. Caustic, whose abilities are fifty times, and whose experience is a thousandfold, greater than mine. Excepting one or two cases in the hospitals, I know the disease only from books. Caustic has treated it hundreds of times."

“Yes, yes, but I can’t send Caustic. In the first place, the lady is a fidgety mamma; and Caustic, with his odd abrupt ways, might frighten her.”

“O dear no, sir; you mistake him; I never met so humane and gentle a creature with his patients in my life.”

“Well, even if it be so, I can’t ask him, because all the other medical men are attending, and the army-men, too; and even if he would consent to give an opinion, it would end in some row one way or another. Whereas, you’ll go to the house as a friend of mine; the child will be introduced casually, and you’ll just say something to satisfy the mother; for, after all, the matter may be one of nervousness merely. But don’t take any fee from her, which I took the liberty of desiring her not to offer, lest, you know, it should by accident come to Caustic’s ears, and make an unpleasantness between you. You, however, must not be the loser; so there’s my note of introduction, and this,” giving me ten guineas, “will find the medicine.”

The money I at once declined; but the captain insisted in that captain-like manner which says, it must be so; and I, thanking him for an excellent patient, bowed him out of the hospital, and promised to wait on the lady in a couple of hours. Having assisted to make up the medicines for the sick, Caustic walked in, with his head hanging on one side as usual, muttering to himself,

“‘ I do remember an apothecary.’ Then changing his note, he began inquiring for the sick, thus, ‘ Sir, is there any news to save our souls withal? None gone to an immortal death? How say ye now—not one? Then on my soul ’tis well! So let us straightways to our charge, and there, our duty well absolving us of future care, care nothing for the future! Worthy mate, come on!’”

So, so, my good friend, thought I, you're as well pleased, I see, as if the money had gone into your pocket instead of mine: for, whenever the doctor was in the full tide of his

good humour—which was almost invariably the case—every one was sure to know it, as nothing less than speaking in blank verse would suit him.

Neither was it your barren doggrel, that any one with a good ear may utter; for it generally displayed his own original mind in quick antithesis, and very often was exceedingly witty. The reader will suffer greatly, therefore, by its being filtered through the weakening medium of my memory. Certainly, it has been my lot—and, to my mind, one of the brightest and happiest parts of it—to have met many men of great conversational ability, but I have met only one or two who at all equalled, and certainly none who ever surpassed Caustic in the continual feast which his active imagination and well-stored mind offered to his listeners.

So completely, however, had the drollery of speaking in blank verse got possession of him, that it frequently popped out when he had not the slightest intention. Once in particular:

we had the flag on board for a few days, on going to Jamaica; and the admiral and Captain Howard were walking the quarter-deck. Going up to his superior, and touching his hat, Caustic thus made his report,—

“ ‘ Sir, there is no addition to the sick,
Who now are getting convalescent fast;
They’re thriving, sir, as well as sick can thrive.
But we want lime-juice and Peruvian bark,
And all our wine is very nearly gone.
Some other drugs, too, damaged by the damp,
Were better changed when next we are in port.
There is my list: the same, sir, as the last,
With the exception of another name,
John Huggins—a mere trifle—burnt his thumb.’ ”

“ Oh most lame and impotent conclusion !”
quoth the captain, as he took the list-book.

Knowing that to actors of musical temperament this disposition to numbers is often unavoidable, I said to Caustic as we walked along:

“ Did you never play a part on a stage, sir ?”

He looked askance at me for a moment, and then, as if talking to himself, broke out—

“ ‘ Ay, what a question now the boy does ask !

I’ve played on many a stage,—and who has not,
That travels far, or is of woman born ?

There is the grand Shaksperian stage of life—
The stage for doctors’ mates from Aberdeen,
And ev’ry stage of ev’ry sad disease

On which we leeches book sick folks for home.

One, sir, we play on daily ; that which floats,
Built for deep tragedy, and many a farce ;

Where all its actors strut on the king’s boards :
Nations look on to see the spectacle.

Blood, wounds, and death, are stern realities,
Nor any stroke of acting shammed but justice !

One only stage eschew,—the last, my friend,—
That where Jack Ketch plays a chief character,
And you support him in it to the drop—no more—
But shout the rabble, and the actor dies !

[*Exeunt omnes—curtain falls.*

But to return :—Caustic laid his hand on my shoulder, and proceeded :—

“ So, a truce to this mummary !—here are our patients: jolly dogs ! to fall in love with physic—rare complaint—very indeed. There must be some cause for it. What, my men, are you served to your liking ?”

“ Yes, sir,” replied he who had asked for an increase.

“ Well, is that your bottle ? if so, my good fellow, let me taste and see that the loblolly boy has made it properly. I’ve ordered you some more sugar in it.”

“ Ah, then, sir, he’s put it in, sure enough ! I thought it was very nice—but I’m ashamed to offer your honour this to taste—I’ve been drinking out of the bottle.”

“ The deuce you have ! and a cup standing by you—dirty fellow ! Is there any other patient who has lemonade, that has not been drinking out of the bottle ?”

No, all of them had taken that inclination.

“ On my soul, gentlemen, you’re a dirty set of blackguards,” quoth Caustic, shamming anger.

But nothing stands in the way of duty—give me yours, sir:—ah ! nothing stands in the way of duty.”

As the man complied with this demand, he showed a degree of reluctance for which I was unable to account; and while the surgeon put the medicine to his lips, he changed colour.

“ Very nice,” said Caustic, in a dry sarcastic tone—“ very ;” and he replaced it on the man’s table, went on to the next, and so throughout the ward. As soon as this curious scene was finished, he turned the nurses out of the room, and locked the door ; then, addressing his patients, said,

“ Tell me, you cheating scoundrels and unmitigated fools ! where did you get the spirit that your medicine is mixed with ?”

“ Spirit, sir !” faltered one.

“ Heart alive, sir ! is there spirit in there ?” exclaimed another, with childlike innocence ; and so all round. Each one swore he knew nothing of the matter. Not a word could we get from them tending to criminate any one.

With many threats and in a great rage in reality, the doctor went out, and telling me to follow him, locked the door; then whispering me not to allow any one to come within hail, left me sentry over the criminals, while he hurried off to the dispensary.

Scarcely had his footsteps died away when I heard a hubbub within the ward, and then one of the patients jumped out of bed and hobbled to the door, having tried which in vain, he bawled out in a sort of under tone,

“ Nurse ! nurse ! ”

On hearing this I slipped stealthily away down the passage, and then shuffling my feet as I walked back like an old woman, I imitated a shrill pipe, and whispered at the key-hole,

“ What d’ye want ? ”

“ Why, open the door, you old hag.”

“ Hag yourself, you old blackguard,” quoth I. “ How can me a go to open the door, you fule, when the doctor has been and tooked away the key ? What d’ye want, I say ? ”

“ Want, you old catamaran !” said the patient, “ why scud below and tell the loblolly boy not to split against himself, for neither old Jalap Jaws, nor his bottle-washer,” (that was me,) “ have been able to get a word out of us.”

“ Haven’t they,” said I, in my own voice, opening the door directly in the old seaman’s face. “ Old Jalap Jaws and his bottle-washer are much obliged to you then for your information.”

When the offender saw me before him, in close juxtaposition with his person, and became convinced of the ruse that had been played off against him, the poor fellow looked as if a straw would have knocked him down.

Uttering an exclamation of surprise, which I need not repeat, he limped away to his bed much faster than ever he got out of it. As soon as Caustic returned, I told him what had happened.

“ One cannot have too much evidence before

punishment," said he ; "but even this discovery of yours we might have done without. I knew that rascal in the dispensary was at the bottom of it all ; so charging him, as if his confederates had confessed everything, I learnt that these fellows had subscribed to bribe him for putting rectified spirit into their medicine ; therefore I took the liberty of knocking him down, and kicking him for falling, as well as finally sending him about his business. For the future, as soon as a patient comes in he must be searched, and his money taken from him. Begin the practice with these fellows at once.

Having gone round and taken from Jack every penny we could find, we left them considerably distressed at their future prospects of no grog. This duty discharged, the surgeon returned on board to dress for dinner, and I set out to call on Mrs. F——, who lived at some distance from the town.

Having been shown into the room where she was sitting, I found there also a young

child sitting on the ground, and an old lady watching it. The mother was reclining on a couch. Rising as I entered, she desired me to take a seat beside her. I had in my waistcoat pocket the captain's note, the corner of which protruded. This I was about to take out and deliver to her, when, with singular quickness, she placed a finger on her lips, and glancing towards the old lady, made some sign, which I translated as one of caution, though on what exact score I could not perceive.

“There is your little patient, sir,” said she, pointing to the child; “he has been expecting you for the last half hour;”—and calling the boy over to her, she began to show me some insignificant swelling of the glands of the throat.

“Well,” thought I, “this is a pretty magnificent case, truly, about which to make such a fuss.”

The blinds of the windows being down to exclude the sun, and the room not being

very light, I bent over the child's head to examine the part. The mother did the same, and I heard her whisper, "Is that note in your pocket for me?"

"Yes, madam," I replied, and was about to give it to her.

All trouble on this point was, however, saved me; for scarcely had the words passed my lips when, with the familiarity of a sister, she slipped her beautiful little fingers into my pocket, drew forth its tiny freight, and ere the old lady could dream of what was passing, had safely hidden the same within her bosom.

Now at this time I really was—don't laugh, reader—a remarkably modest fellow; and I put it to the whole of my professional fraternity, however cautious and reserved in these delicate matters,—from my most esteemed friend, Josephus Handsaroma, downwards,—whether it was possible to have undergone this little freedom at the hands of a beautiful woman, and yet have retained perfect equanimity?

Impossible! and the excess of my sea-bashfulness displayed itself in a most crimson suffusion of the face.

“What’s coming next,” thought I; “I’ll be off before the major makes his appearance; for if he doesn’t prove *Ursa Major*—to say nothing of *Taurus* or *Gemini*—I’m no astrologer.”

“Madam,” said I, “there is so little the matter with your child, that if you proceed with your present plan of treatment, and add that of a salt-water shower-bath every morning, he will rapidly be as well as you or I.”

“Why, doctor,” said the mother, laying a finger on my shoulder, with a look which proved how well she knew that the club of Hercules would have proved less powerful, “do write for the *poor little sufferer*! Yes, yes, you must! And you’ll take some refreshment too!”

“None, I thank you.”

“O but I insist on it. There are the pens

and ink. I shall return in a few minutes ;” and off went my lady.

“ *Majora canamus,*” thought I, and of course I could not refuse to obey. Having written some immaterial prescription, I turned round and entered into conversation with the old lady, remarking to myself that she was a cheering sight in the West Indies, where Europeans are accustomed to consider life as let out on very short leases. Some wine and fruit now made their appearance, and having found that my companion came from my own county in Ireland, we forgot, among numerous inquiries and replies, how fast the first half hour had departed.

Mrs. F——, now returning, looked at my prescription, and, retiring to a window, summoned me to her, to translate my barbarous Latin. While I was so doing, she drew a still smaller note than the one I had brought her, from the same place of refuge to which she had conveyed Captain Howard’s, and popping it

quickly into the pocket from whence she had drawn the other, took me by the hand, wished me good morning, and begged me to call half an hour earlier next day.

“ Well,” thought I, as I got clear of the premises, “ you are a cool hand certainly, and doubtless have had much practice in your time.” Drawing forth the intruded billet, I perceived that it was addressed to Captain Howard. “ This is a pretty affair, very ! What is to be done ? There was just about as much the matter with that young son of hers as there is with myself ; and clearly Captain Howard expects me to become the channel of a clandestine correspondence with another man’s wife. Truly I feel honoured, greatly honoured, at his selection of an agent.”

As I said this to myself, I paused and held a Sterne-like colloquy.

“ What am I to do ? ” demanded Pride. “ There is only one path to pursue,” whispered Honour. “ I shall lose a powerful friend,” mut-

tered Self-interest. "And your promotion into the bargain," added Avarice. "But the character of a gentleman should be kept sacred," cried Truth. "Ay," added Shame, "and pandering to the vices of another is no part of it." "Then I will decline to take another line from him," said Courage. "And prepare to leave his ship, if not the service," rejoined Foresight. "The service may go to the devil," cried Anger, "and I'll go on board and tell him I can see his patient no more. His money too must be returned, and that's not the least delicate part of it."

Having inquired for the captain at his lodgings, he had, as I anticipated, just set off for the ship, and thither I followed him. On seeing me come up the side, he quitted the taffrail near which he was standing talking to the first lieutenant, and coming forward, held out his hand, saying, "If you have seen your patient, you have something for me."

I made no reply, but drawing the note from my pocket, presented it to him. Seizing it with avidity and a smile of thanks, that, by bringing to mind all his excellent qualities, sadly staggered my virtuous resolves, he hurried down below ; while I paced the quarter-deck, communing with myself how my determination was to be carried into effect.

“Now,” thought I, “could I only go to Caustic, he would tell me in a moment, how, in the most delicate way in the world, the most indelicate subject should be broached. But I am under a promise that this shall be wholly a confidential transaction, and I must keep my word. I see now why Captain Howard would not employ him. He rightly guessed that the stern son of genius would be the last man on earth to play the part of Sir Pandarus of Troy ; and I am not much obliged to him for thinking less worthily of me.”

Armed with the anger which this thought called forth, I made a rush for the main-deck, to burst upon my superior in its full fervour. As I drew near the sentry, however, Fancy represented him reading the beautiful Helen's letter, and the double rage into which he would be hurried, on my disturbing him with such an opposite picture.

"No—no!" said I, "there can be no harm in giving the criminal at least some little breathing time. Meanwhile I will go down into the berth, and con over what I am to say.

Having descended the steerage, the first person I encountered was my fellow assistant reading a book.

"What have you got there, Andrew?" said I, glad to change the current of my thoughts for a moment.

"What have I here, sir? Just the principles and practice of Christianity, written by a devout minister of your ain kirk. I cannot say I like many of his prelatical opinions, but

most of his observations are discreetly made as to the purity of our lives; and in a climate like this, where many a hale fellow is so suddenly cut off, as we may say, in the flower of his youth, it behoves us to take tent to our ways."

This remark was so gravely uttered, and came so apparently from the bottom of Andrew's heart, that it produced a deep effect upon me. I did not attempt a reply, but sitting down beside my brother assistant, considered in my own mind the possibility of my being an example of the melancholy truth of his words, or that, perhaps, even the kind-hearted but erring Howard himself might be so.

With bitter self-accusation should I then reflect that I had, even in the slightest degree, been accessory to that which I felt assured could have been little short of actual guilt, and was certainly far gone in moral impropriety.

"Yes—I will profit by Lindsay's example—

I will not only decline to be any longer the channel of this madness, but see if I cannot, in so doing, drop one or two words which will awaken Captain Howard to a sense of his insanity. He is a fine candid fellow, and will doubtless appreciate the act, and the struggle through which I have been able to resolve on its achievement."

Rising from my seat, I repaired to the main-deck, and sent in my compliments to the captain, with a request for an interview. It was granted. When I entered the after cabin, he was lying on a sofa, with a miniature before him, and the still open note in his hand. Roused as it were from one of those delicious reveries which form part of the rapture of receiving a love-letter, his countenance, so well formed to express the emotions of such an hour, changed rapidly, as he read in my look something infinitely less pleasant than the lines of Mrs. F——.

Having taken the chair to which he pointed,

I drew my breath like a lion about to plunge into a cold bath, or rather I should say, a hot one, for this was certainly hot water, and then began.

“I found my little patient, Captain Howard, so slightly indisposed, that it will be quite unnecessary for me to trouble the major’s family by calling there again; and I have therefore come to return you, sir, the sum of money you were kind enough to offer me”—the captain’s brow began to lower—“since I feel that I should compromise all honour as a professional man, were I to take money in a case in which I can bestow in return no equivalent advantage:” and I laid the ten guineas on the ledge formed by the cabin windows.

“Why, what nonsense is this, Mr. O’Donnel?” said he, rising up. “I never thought the child ill—I told you so. I said you would have to deal with nothing but a fidgety fine lady—did I not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“ Well, then, where are you so greatly disappointed? She writes to me to say, that her mind is quite set at ease by your assistance; and here, just as this is achieved, a pack of silly scruples get possession of your brain, and turn everything topsy-turvy. Just put the money in your pocket, and call on her again as you promised.”

“ Captain Howard, I assure you I made no promise of the sort; and as to accepting the money, that is out of the question.”

“ Do you *mean* that, sir?” said he, looking me sternly in the face.

“ I do, sir,” I replied, as my eyes instinctively sought the ground, though I could not help thinking at the time, that mine had the least cause to be abashed of the two.

“ Oh, sir, well—as you like,” quoth the captain, with affected nonchalance; then, after a second’s pause, “ perhaps you will be good enough to hand the filthy dirt to me?”

“ Here it is, sir—ten guineas, I believe.”

“Very likely,” grasping it in his left hand. The cabin windows, to obviate the heat, had been all thrown open; and taking a guinea in his right hand, he deliberately jerked it into the sea. He then took a turn across the cabin, and away went another.

“There is more here than meets the eye, sir,” presently resumed he; but, without interrupting either his leisurely pace or the expensive pastime that characterised it, he continued—“May I tax your condescension in explaining yourself?”

“Certainly, sir. The great kindness I have met at your hands in particular, to say nothing of the generosity which always actuates you towards all your officers, deserves no less than the greatest candour in return. Still I regret to be obliged to speak on such a subject; but having observed that Mrs. F—— received your note so as to avoid the observation of her nurse, and placed her own answer to it in my hands in the same clan-

destine manner, I cannot but regard this correspondence between a single gentleman and a married lady to be such as it is not consistent with the honour of any third party to promote."

As I said this, Captain Howard paused in his walk; two or three of the guineas yet remained in his hand, and dashing them all out of the window together, he advanced with a rapid step to where I was standing; and while a fierce and bitter sneer gathered on his thin lips, he said—"Since you have taken upon yourself to read me a moral lecture, be good enough to define, with your own strict ideas of sobriety, how a single gentleman and a married lady should correspond—supposing always that they felt a friendship, of which not even your pure self might be ashamed?"

"No man of honour need ask *that* question, Captain Howard," said I, as the blood rose hotly in my veins, at what I felt to be undeserved treatment. Reflecting, however, that

some allowance should be made for one not always accustomed to hear the truth so plainly spoken, I added the word—*twice*. “No man of honour need ask that question twice ! The only channel through which such a correspondence should pass, is that of the lady’s husband ; and perhaps, sir, you will allow me to add—”

“Nothing, sir!—not a word ! You have already said more than sufficient. If your motives are sincere, I respect them ; but you cannot imagine either that your conduct should be agreeable, or your farther presence necessary.”

Captain Howard here made me a low bow, which, however, I did not return, but in a towering rage, walked below, and sat down in the steerage. After a few minutes, I said to myself,

“This feeling of annoyance is absurd. What credit should I deserve in my own mind from following the dictates of a better feeling, if no sacrifice was thereby to be entailed ? Captain Howard’s conduct is just what I

ought to have expected ; so I will no longer allow it to ruffle me. In one thing only I have done wrong—I should have returned his bow. Stab a man to the heart if you choose, but always do it like a gentleman. *Mais n'importe !* I am a happier man now, without his favour, than under the opposite circumstances I ever could have been with it. Yet, I must say, I wish I were at liberty to narrate the whole of the circumstances to Caustic. I am sure he, at any rate, would fully support me in the views I have taken. Still more would honest Andrew there, who sits reading his theology, little dreaming of the world that goes on around him, or what a martyr, on a small scale, chance has made of his brother doctor's mate ! How would he be startled at the proposing of such a Mercury's office to him ! I should like to see his face, as the kirk appeared on one side of him, and the daughter of Belial on the other."

"Please, sir, the surgeon wants to speak to

you on the main-deck," said one of the ship's boys, bringing down the message.

Going thither in full obedience, there I found Caustic pacing to and fro.

"Tut man alive! what have ye been doing with the captain?" said he, as I came up to him.

"Nothing very particular, sir, that I know of."

"Or that ye mean to tell of, rather, I suppose? Well, well! you're right to keep your own matters to yourself; only something has happened between ye, I'll affirm. He sent for me a few minutes since, to say that Andrew Lindsay—save the mark!—was to relieve you in charge of the sick ashore. The reason he gave was, that one might not be favoured beyond the other; but I saw by his look something has gone wrong, sir—clean wrong! What have ye been about? Waes me! young blood will be hot blood! You Irishmen are sad fellows! Have ye not been able to let that nurse crea-

ture Jenny alone? I saw the captain looking rather sweet on her. Are there not black devils enough on the island, but you must be disturbing the monarch of the forest with his game? Is there no balm in Gilead, no physician in Israel, you vagabond? Well, well! all that's about it is this,—Hermish Mac Termish is mortally savage, and I fear you've lost a friend: and so, young man, if the evil destinies of thy genius should cast up a vacancy for a surgeon, as my soul lives, he'll give it to Andrew—supple, senseless Andrew! the booing hound! What could make ye give him such an advantage over you, so fairly as you had the start?"

"Mr. Lindsay I believe to be a very good young man, sir," said I, anxious to change the conversation.

"He be d——!" quoth Caustic, hastily,—and then continuing,

"When you've lived in the world as long as I,
More skill, sir, will ye have in choosing such;

And read men's hearts as magi do the stars,
By looking on them. Well, the thing is done !
But we'll see more anon ! Get ye below,—
Bear the great tidings to the canny Scot,
How a bright sparkling from the glorious sun,
Upon his sandy locks alighting quick,
Bids all their young inhabitants make hay !

“ Take him ashore, in short, and give up charge ; and then, I suppose, you will order your traps off to the ship. The officers are all asked to dine with a fat sugar-merchant, whose name we all of us have failed to remember, but whose red nose we never can forget. You need not return on board to relieve me in charge of the ship. I shall not go,—my soul liketh him not !—he is a sweaty man ! Such were not Julius Cæsar, Antony, or Tom Thumb, or any other of our noted great. No man, sir, with an ounce of mind was ever known to sweat. Go, my good lad, and eat thee a good dinner. There's nothing that I know so well supports a man under his misfortunes. Your-

self," counting upon his fingers, "your *bed*, your *dinner*, and your *purse* ; these are the four and only steadfast friends that heaven has given to man !"

"What's that you say, doctor?" interrupted the captain, coming out from his cabin behind us.

"Nothing, sir," returned Caustic, "but a little of what I may call natural philosophy, which I was inculcating upon my young friend here."

"Ay, ay, then let me too be a sharer;" and taking Caustic by the arm, he led him away to the quarter-deck : for, however great the "tantrum," that his mightiness, or, indeed, any other officer in the ship might be in, the doctor's exceeding good temper and humorous conversation were sure to soothe it down.

On hearing the change of duty destined for him, Lindsay received it with a degree of equanimity which made me think that Caustic—who had never shown a disposition to like his

countryman—had, in this instance, been guilty of an injustice.

The dinner at the house of the fat sugar-merchant with the red nose was, as Caustic had prophesied, a very good dinner, and certainly did, rather than otherwise, tend to restore my good-humour.

Captain Howard seemed surprised at seeing me there, but in no way manifested any remains of that anger which had so liberally and deliberately jerked ten guineas from his windows to feed the sharks, who, after all, would doubtless have thanked him much more for a couple of four-pound pieces of pork. As usual, the dinner was followed by an evening party and a dance, at which, for the first time, I missed my worthy captain.

On asking our host whither he had gone, I was told that some urgent duty required his temporary absence. I wondered what duty it could be, but said nothing. Twelve o'clock soon arrived, but the urgent duty had not yet

set free the honourable captain. All the belles of the island too were present—the same blooming faces that I had been accustomed to see and dance with night after night; and there, too, was the major with his whist; but where was his wife? where the engaging and lovely Mrs. F.——?

Nobody could give any account of her. One said she was coming—others, that she was not; and one wag told me she died that morning of yellow Jack, and that he had taken her off to keep an appointment that evening with the land-crabs. Having seen the lady myself out of doors a few hours before, I took the liberty of telling him, that none but fools kept appointments with such folks, but that they were then waiting for himself.

My waggish informant looked rather blank at this reply, and I went up to the major, her husband. He played a very good game, and would not have brooked any one speaking to him, to have said his house was on fire, or his

wife dying, much less simply asking where she was, except while his antagonists were dealing. Seizing one of these opportunities, he told me he believed she was very ill.

“Since when?” I demanded.

“Oh ! since yesterday. Very ill !—sick headache !—and Lord knows what ! Can’t stir from the house.”

Very likely, I thought ; about as much so as the appointment with the land-crabs : though, for the matter of appointment, that seemed to me far more likely than any of the rest, when I considered the “*the urgent business*” of Captain Howard. Still I determined to keep myself clear of the matter. My suspicions were no evidence. It was no concern of mine, if the honours at whist were worth more attention than the honour of a wife ; so I went and took another glass of sangaree, and a fresh partner, and said with Caustic, “We’ll see more anon.”

When the small hours began to wane into the

large ones, we went on board ; and immediately after due attention had been paid to the few sick still remaining on board, Caustic sent me ashore to superintend the refitting up of our medicine-chest. In pursuance of this duty, I met Andrew Lindsay ; and as soon as my service was concluded, I turned to depart.

“ Can ye inform me, Mr. O'Donnel, which is the preceese road to the house of Mrs. Major F—— ? ”

“ Oh, oh, my boy ! ” thought I ; “ so you're put upon the scent, are you ? One would have thought the sensitive captain wouldn't have thrust himself in the way of a second declination. But, *de gustibus non est disputandum*. If *I* was refractory — a sinner like myself — Lord save the captain from the rebuking fangs of the serious Andrew, when once the leal kirkman opens in full cry.”

Determined, however, to have some fun with my successor in the Caduceus line, I put on a very long face, and said,—

“The way, Andrew, is so plain, that you cannot mistake it. Though ’tis a pity that a young man of your promise should fall a victim to that blood-thirsty major her husband! For the sake of science, my good fellow, and the mother that bore you, take care how you deliver to my lady the note you have in your pocket.”

“Tut, sir! it’s most ungentleel of you to have been prying into the contents of my coat,” cried Andrew, as suddenly and angrily as possible.

“Lord, man! your pocket’s as safe as need be—it wasn’t there I saw the note.”

“In the name of gudeness where then, sir?”

“In your face, Andrew, to be sure!”

If, as a magician, I had laid open to his view the most terrible secrets of nature, he could not have been more surprised, and laughing heartily at his detection, I went my way.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Here’s ——’s pistol ready for your life,
And kinder still, a —— for your wife.”

ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS.

ON the evening which followed the scene with Andrew Lindsay, as described in the last chapter, Caustic himself spent the evening ashore, and having slept at the house of his host, returned on board the next afternoon by two o’clock, this being the hour at which the captain’s cabin was open, to afford his officers the advantage of his library.

I, who never saw any particular advantage in “despiting” myself, was reading there; I was alone, and when Caustic entered I gave him a

report of the sick list, and he took down a book, and seating himself near me, we enjoyed that dear privilege of friendly minds—now luxuriating in our “meadows of margin and rivulets of type,” and now breaking off into a few delicious moments of conversation, as anything occurred to our vagrant fancies.

After a long pause, Caustic suddenly laid down his book upon its face—a thing he never did unless when deeply absorbed. After looking round the cabin for a few minutes in deep abstraction, he said solemnly,

“The tenant of this floating house is a fine young fellow!--a noble-hearted young fellow! But, sir, he is going to the devil!”

Having said this, he resumed his volume, and for ten minutes not another word was spoken.

“It often strikes me as astonishing,” quoth Caustic, laying down his book a second time, and resuming the severed thread, “how great is frequently the influence obtained by

worthless women over men of high parts!—and over men of no description is a woman's influence so great as over sailors! O'Donnel, I know you observe passing events; you have seen the game of whist—shail I call it—that is going on ashore?”

I made no reply, further than such as a slight motion of the head might be construed to convey.

“ Last night he dined with us, and absented himself soon after dinner; he did the same the night before. She not to be seen either—said to be ill; met that smooth-tongued knave, Andrew Lindsay, going up to her house; took his hat fairly off his head as usual, because he thinks I am as fond of booing as himself, and out fell a note; picked it up for him of course; thought as much—*billet doux* from him to her—slippery Andrew the bearer of course. Well, at any rate we sail the day after to-morrow—not much mischief can ensue 'twixt this and then! Major a most complacent body of a

husband—perfect Cato !—a breed upon the increase !—last mark of a luxurious decay !”

The doctor ceased, and looking down as intently on his book as if he had never spoken, I smiled at his coolness, and though I made no reply, I saw at once that no part of our superior’s conduct had escaped his observation. I learnt also the truth of his estimation of Andrew Lindsay—the canting scoundrel !—who, with so much profession on his lips, and simplicity in his manner, had so little self-denial in his heart !

And here also was to me a marked proof of Caustic’s grasp of mind. To all appearance, the book of womankind was the only one he never studied ; yet I never heard him make a remark about them which did not show at once the depth of his experience, and his original way of using it.

Barely had the silence been resumed when the door opened, and in walked the object of our thoughts—Captain Howard. When he saw

Caustic he was about to speak, but on recognising me he simply waved his hand to both, and passed on to the inner cabin. By mutual assent we both of us at once put by our books, rose, and retired: since, as the captain was now so little aboard, we thought it wrong to intrude on his solitude during that brief space.

That night I again remained in the ship, but I learnt next day that the same "*urgent business*" had withdrawn the captain, and still Mrs. F—— was indisposed.

The next day at daylight we were to sail! Leave ceased to the great extent it had before been given—other thoughts occupied us. Half of my brother-officers were, or fancied themselves, deeply in love—almost skin deep—and not a soul could spare an idea for our flirting captain.

About nine o'clock in the evening Caustic was seized with a violent sickness, which at first looked so like cholera as to frighten us all severely. At ten, however, the symptoms had

abated, and Lindsay and myself were sitting in his cabin reading to him by his own desire, while he, lulled by opium, just hung upon the confines of the world of dreams, and the world of pains !

I was reading, but at a message from the first lieutenant, I gave the book up to my brother mate, and repaired to the quarter-deck.

“ How is the surgeon now ? ” said the first lieutenant.

“ Much better, sir.”

“ I’m glad of it. Let Mr. Lindsay sit up to attend him, if necessary ; and do you go to bed, and stand by to get up to-morrow morning to go ashore with me on duty. Have ready also, to put into your pocket, a small case of instruments. And, sir, remember, I rely on your sense of duty as an officer, and your honour as a gentleman, that not a word of this conversation is mentioned.”

I touched my hat in assent, and walked below. “ This is a world,” thought I, “ where

one sees queer things!" and I, after this announcement, am expected to sleep soundly, and to take the whole advantage of the remaining six hours! To what a vastly fine piece of machinery your true disciplinarian would reduce a man! What can be in the wind now? Murder of some sort, doubtless." However, the first task was to get ready my part of the "cold steel;" which I did, as well as I could guess at the duty before me, whether for the slaughter of a bullock or a kid; and that all arranged, I turned in, quite comfortable in course, as Jack says.

"The persons of a hakim and an ambassador are sacred," muttered I, dropping asleep; "they won't shoot me;" and after a thousand dreamy conjectures, mostly wrong, and two or three right ones, I fell fast locked in slumber.

The next morning, at a quarter to four o'clock, I found myself rowing ashore with the first lieutenant. We landed. The drowsy

boat's crew waited in the barge, and Gibbon and myself proceeded to the quarters of the captain.

“So it *has* come to this at last!” was my soliloquy. “How invariably certain lines will tend to given centres! A man placed in my position has nothing for it, but to form some of the most melancholy speculations to which the mind can give rise. Half an hour more, and I may see that man fall in the worst of causes, whom, a few days since, I beheld the admired hero of hundreds in what was comparatively the best.

In a few minutes Captain Howard and Lieutenant Gibbon joined me; the latter was looking sad and dejected, the former pale but cheerful, and yet most unlike the daring and skilful seaman I had seen on the carnage-stained lower-deck of the *Epaminondas*, during that awful night of our engagement. There was all the cool determination, and the same life; but *then* no pallor overspread the coun-

tenance—no sinking of the heart, oppressed by a bad cause.

We proceeded to the field—not one word was spoken during the whole way. When we gained the spot, which did, indeed, look beautiful in the imperfect light that precedes the sunburst of a tropical day, the captain suddenly turned round, and shook me warmly and silently by the hand. It was as much as to say—here our difference is for ever ended. I felt it as a melancholy omen, for I loved the man. I returned his clasp long and ardently, and the tears started into my eyes as I thought in how few minutes that grasp might be powerless in death. I tried to give utterance to the warm affection swelling at my heart, but I could not effect my purpose, and while yet making the effort, the opposite party appeared upon the ground.

I immediately retired. I saw the ground marked, and the principals placed, and then at once perceived that the captain's antagonist was

not, as I had naturally concluded, the major, whose figure was much stouter, and that of an older man. This puzzled me exceedingly—I knew not what to think of it—and while endeavouring to reconcile this change of persons, the pistols were delivered—the seconds drew aside—the word was given—the parties fired—and Captain Howard fell !

This I had anticipated. Every one made a rush towards him, and, in three moments after his fall, he was surrounded by four whom I could not help feeling were the accessories to his fate.

“ Doctor !” said he, looking in my face with perfect calmness and intrepidity, “ I am a dying man ! Colonel Macintosh,” turning to his antagonist, “ give me your hand.”

The gentleman who was addressed was kneeling at his side, and pressed the captain’s ashy hand between his, with a degree of remorse that went to the very soul of each of the bystanders. The only words that broke from him, however, were—

“ My God ! to have shot such a man for such a cause ! ”

The captain now cried out for water, and fainted. The water I had fortunately brought with me, but for some minutes I never expected to see my poor commander revive. He did, however, and I searched for his wound. This was on the right side, directly under the arm, which concealed it, while it served as a channel for the trickling blood. There was not much hæmorrhage, but he complained, as poor Nelson did, of being shot through the back-bone, and spoke with extreme difficulty.

As near as we could understand what was said, Captain Howard affirmed the ball to have passed through him, and lodged in the left side. When, however, we attempted to remove his clothes and examine the wound, he uttered such agonising cries to be let lie quiet, and die in peace, that we had not the heart to attempt moving him on board. Gibbon, therefore, sat down upon the

ground, supporting his head and shoulders on his lap; his antagonist's second held some salts for him to smell, and the colonel remained kneeling by his side, grasping his hand, and watching his pale and handsome features in an agony of despair.

His cap had fallen off, and the first gentle risings of the morning air fluttered now and then among the long light locks that curled over his forehead; his eyes remained closed, and nothing but an occasional motion of the lips betrayed remaining life. Meanwhile I had cut away his clothes, and got to the wound. To all appearance, the ball must have passed directly through the cavity of the chest; but then, considering what vital organs it must in all probability have wounded, the wonder was that he should still survive.

The bleeding had nearly ceased. I looked at it for a moment, and considered over the matter. The pulse was already stronger, and

when I took into account his exclamation of being shot through the back-bone, I could not believe that the course of the bullet had been direct, or its effects so deadly as I at first supposed. During the time of this examination, the breathless suspense with which my three assistants waited on my words, no description can fully depict.

On putting my probe into the wound, its progress was immediately arrested by one of the ribs.

“Oh, we may hope !” I exclaimed. The captain heard my words imperfectly, and looking up into the first lieutenant’s face replied, “Then, Gibbon, I make a vacancy for you—no man deserves it more. Two weeks ago how differently this would have told !”

The others, hearing this, thought *they* had made the mistake—“My dear Captain Howard, you mistake ; I said there *was* hope.”—He looked at me for a moment and, smiling faintly as if struggling to speak, muttered—

“No, my dear boy, you are wrong!” and he fainted again. This time he recovered more quickly, and we got him to swallow some hartshorn and laudanum, the benefit of which showed itself immediately.

“Don’t talk, Captain Howard,” said I, when he had come round a little more. “I am certain I am not wrong; we may yet be at the taking of many a good prize together. I am going to try and trace the course of the bullet, and whenever you think I press with my fingers on the right track, cry out ‘yes.’”

My impression was, that this over-dose of lead had glanced off the rib, and traversed under the skin. So passing my hand fully round his back, a convulsive “yes” at every nail’s length told me I was right. On reaching the vertebral column, a large swelling and intense pain proclaimed the seat of mischief. Seeing there was nothing to be apprehended from this, I with the other hand traced the ball to the left side, nearly opposite to where it had entered. Think-

ing that the sight of his enemy would do him more good than anything else, and finding it close to the surface, I took a scalpel, and, before the captain was aware of my intention, by a small opening released the captive.

On feeling the knife, he cried out very angrily, till I held up the result before him and said, "Here's the rascal, sir; he has made the old traverse, in at one side and out at the other."

Captain Howard looked at the extracted bullet stedfastly for a moment, gave a sigh that seemed to carry off a load of apprehension, and while his lips involuntarily played into a laugh, bestowed a certain *outré* but sailorlike execration upon the bullet's "eyes," which did more to clear up the cloudy countenances around him than could have done the most philosophic remarks of Socrates.

As the laudanum acted on his spirits, he called me to give him "another morning dram," and said that when I could report his

“shot-holes plugged,” he was ready for weighing. This was joyful news for us all, but to no one more so than the colonel. He shook me by the hand again and again, as if I could have had any influence on the escape which he had made.

Having prepared a rude kind of hammock of our coats and handkerchiefs, the captain was carefully carried down to the boat, though not without sundry exclamations. The colonel saw him on board, and waited till the anchor was weighed and the ship had fairly gathered way in standing out to sea. Then, with many requests that he might hear quickly how his antagonist got on, he and his second left the ship; though, as Caustic afterwards said, it was paying a dear as well as a queer price for a man’s love, to let him first shoot you through the body.

CHAPTER IX.

“Take pains ; be perfect—adieu.”

MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM.

ILL as he still was, the good-hearted surgeon left his bed as soon as he learnt that his captain was wounded, and came to hold a sort of consultation by his cot. Lindsay also entered a few minutes afterwards, but the captain no sooner saw him than he said, “We won’t trouble you, sir, at present ;” and Andrew, with a profound “boo,” withdrew. Caustic, though too unwell to stand, no sooner heard the details and examined

the vertebræ, than he said, with one of his nonchalant sarcasms, which those who knew him can never forget—

“Tut, tut, Captain Howard, this back-bone of yours may do a deal of mischief yet, if you’ll only keep quiet and let it alone. It’s had a severe rap; I wouldn’t advise you to take another exactly on the same spot; a little higher up or lower down, maybe, would prove more agreeable.”

“Agreeable! you Caustic vagabond! If it were *your* back, you wouldn’t be quite so pleasant on the subject.”

“Why, yes, Captain Howard, we all cry ‘oh’ to the burden we don’t bear; but we men of science are too wise to put ourselves in the way of these little pleasantries.”

“Ay, ay! But now you have me on *my* back, I need expect no mercy. I tell you what I wish you would do, as you are nearly as bad as I am:—have your cot brought here and hung

up on the other side of the cabin. We should make a capital sick mess."

To this Caustic readily assenting, the carpenters put up a screen-berth opposite the captain's, and Caustic, without more ado, was quietly installed co-tenant of the cabin.

This being arranged, the former insisted on my reading *Gil Blas* to them ; while Caustic afforded a sort of running commentary, and enriched the same with some of his best stories ; till Captain Howard laughed to such a degree that, fearful of the effect, I took the liberty of declaring them both my patients, shut the book, and went on deck.

It was at this time about eleven o'clock. The two brigs that had been lying at Barbadoes had sailed with us for Martinique, and one of them now made a signal that she wanted to communicate. Having shortened sail till she came up, the commander put off in a boat, and informed Captain Howard that a death vacancy had just occurred on board his vessel, from the murder

of her surgeon ; that he had on board no assistant, and now therefore required the appointment to be filled up.

The murder had occurred thus : a quarter of an hour before the signal was made, the captain and the surgeon were walking the quarter-deck of the brig, when, just as they were turning round under the maintop, one of the seamen from above let fall a marlingspike of extra size and weight, being nearly a foot and a half long, by two inches and a half broad at its largest diameter. The sharp round point of this instrument having struck the surgeon's skull, pierced through and through it ; and the poor fellow dropped dead upon the deck.

The seaman, on being secured, had immediately declared it to have been an accident ; but the commander affirmed that this was impossible, since the weapon was a top marlingspike, never intended to be carried further aloft, and always hitherto secured by a strong laniard spliced through its eye. When found in the surgeon's

brain, however, the laniard was gone, and though one or two could not deny that it was securely fastened when the ship left Barbadoes, the culprit declared that he found it lying loose in the top, and took it up in his hand to the masthead for the purpose of refastening it, when his foot tripping in a coil of rope, it slipped from his hold through lubber's hole, and glancing from one of the catharpin shrouds, inflicted the fatal blow.

The offender was immediately placed in irons, and the commander now applied for a surgeon, whose first duty would be to assist in holding an inquest on the body of his predecessor. The captain, having given directions to his clerk to prepare an acting order till such time as the commander-in-chief should confirm it, sent for me. When I entered his cabin he had a paper in his hand, which he put into mine, saying—"This day, it seems, brings each of us his deserts. I wish you joy, O'Donnel. There is is your future captain"—pointing to commander

E——, who sat by Howard's cot, looking by far the paler of the two.

His appearance struck me as singular at the time, but holding out his hand with every apparent warmth, he begged to join in the congratulation of Captain Howard, and then desired me to lose no time in getting my traps together, that I might return in his boat. This was indeed a short notice to take leave of so many shipmates whom I esteemed and respected, and loth was I to part. For a few minutes I almost determined to give Lindsay up my promotion, and remain where I had met so much kindness and so many friends.

A moment's reflection, however, convinced me, that if ever I intended to accept promotion at all, it must at last come to the same point. With many a sigh, therefore, I heaped my traps together, shook hands all round, and thought I was at least lucky in getting a captain who could condescend to take his surgeon's baggage in his own boat.

CHAPTER X.

“Thou shalt be both the plaintiff and the judge of thine own cause.”

TWELFTH NIGHT.

DIFFERENT men have different ideas of luck. For my part, I must confess I have often thought of it, talked of it, witnessed it, and wished for it; but as to experiencing the thing, I take upon me to say, that I am one of the most unlucky devils that ever Fortune played football with. Why now, it was only last night—but no matter. That story will keep till another time. I certainly do now and then console my-

self by thinking there must be a fine reversion coming yet, if I can but keep hold of life till it arrives.

Before I had got many boats' lengths from the dear old Epaminondas, something suddenly caused me to remember that I had just had the horrible misfortune of being made surgeon in one of the vilest floating purgatories in the West Indies !

I recollected, as if by magic, the unhappy discontented brig, from the number of whose deserters the Barbadoes sharks were fed. I looked at the men in the boat ; their sallow discontented faces presented the most sad and complete contrast to the seamen I had left behind me. As my eye wandered from them to their pallid and anxious, but icelike commander, I recollected his emotion in the cabin.

“ As I live ! ” thought I, “ this has been an attempt to assassinate—not their surgeon—but his superior ! The blow has fallen by some accident on the wrong spot—the sword of Damo-

cles descended on the guiltless head. Faith, but I'll take care how I'm found walking in your company, Captain E——. If I had in any way possessed the power, I would have given the world to have returned on board the frigate. But it was impossible; and so miserable did I feel at thinking of the exchange fortune had thrust upon me, that I felt almost inclined to tear in pieces the acting order I held in my hand, and throw it overboard.

On reaching the brig, which I shall call the *Infernal*, everything I saw tended to confirm my apprehensions—a dirty and slovenly ship—slavish, suspicious looking officers—midshipmen almost in rags—and sullen, unwilling men. “(O Fortune!” muttered I, “hast thou not enough persecuted me, that thou shouldst bring me here?”

In the actualities of life, however, I sought refuge from my despair. I saw my little peculiarities got on board, and bundled down without much ceremony into the cabin of the deceased.

Then came the inquest. This part was soon played. When you find an iron pike thrust through a man's skull, and penetrating beyond the base of the brain into the throat, it does not require the skill of a Guthrie to pronounce the same a very sufficient cause of death.

The verdict was murder of course—the captain wished it to be so—that was enough; and his will, I undertake to affirm, was much more consulted in the matter—ay, and much more proper too—than anything that could have been discovered in any of those silly laws of evidence with which idle lawyers clog their cobwebbed brains. Not that this, mark you, resulted from any want of mercy; for the jury did not take away the prisoner's life! Everybody knew he was as good as hung already, long before a single juror was empanelled.

The inquest finished, and the surgeon buried, the mess went to dinner. The sea was not very rough, nor did I consider myself in particularly bad health; but yet a most unaccount-

able fit of sea-sickness took possession of me, and I went on deck. There, as my particularly bad luck would have it, whom should I meet but the commander, and before I could avoid him, he seized me by the arm to walk the deck. To walk the deck forsooth ! If that was not malice aforethought, I know nothing of the matter. But this isn't likely. I declare that every time we approached the fatal main-mast, I felt as if a cold frog were creeping up my back, or rather down it ! After the second turn, unable to stand it any longer, I protested I was so unwell that I must retire to my cot.

Egad ! thought I, the neck of these quarter-deck walks must be broken, or mine will be. This fellow will dispose of as many naval doctors in a single cruise, as come up in a whole season in Leith smacks from Aberdeen !

That day I was asked to dine in the cabin, where I had the honour of meeting the captain's clerk, a miserable animal, whose soul

seemed to have been taken from the body of a spaniel to fill that of a slave. He neither smiled nor sighed, and scarcely breathed, and would as soon have thought of speaking without being spoken to, as of swallowing the carving knife.

That dinner fully revealed to me how truly I had estimated the position maintained between the commander and his inferiors, even if the hint and innuendo so freely bandied about among the gun-room officers had not before led me to suspect it. Of a more uncomfortable dinner, or one more wretchedly stinted, I never partook at a superior's table. The wine being of an order little superior to the viands, I felt it to be a great release when I heard a broad hint given for the "guests" to leave the cabin.

As is usually the case, quarters succeeded, and then the top-sails were reefed. Nothing could be more lubberly than the general style in which this was executed. The purser

and myself were talking near the taffrail: he was a canny northern, and bade me remark the lazy manner in which the men attempted to discharge their duty: asking me if I could reconcile that with the character of a commander who was the most strict man in the service for insisting on the very letter of the law, with respect to all who were under his orders.

“So,” added Mr. Nipcheese, “take care to bear this in mind; for it may be the means of saving you much annoyance.”

While we were yet talking, the second captain of the maintop, who, as a smart young man, was a marked exception to the great majority of the ship’s crew, happened, in his efforts to stimulate his men to get their sail reefed first, to lose his balance at the lee yardarm, and fell overboard.

He was a stout, strong swimmer, and, on re-appearing on the surface just under the counter, was as collected as a man could well be expected under such trying circumstances to

prove. The sea was pretty smooth, and the ship making little way; we had no difficulty, therefore, in seeing him slowly drop astern. With as little emotion as if it had been his tobacco-box, the captain ordered one of the quarter boats to be lowered. The men with equal deliberation set about obeying the order.

I, who had been accustomed to see a fellow-creature's life in such a case an object of the greatest solicitude, was straining my eyes with the strongest anxiety and fear, lest the lessening object should become too imperceptible for recovery. "If they don't make haste," said I, "he'll be lost."

"Na, na, ye're wrong, sir, nothing of the sort," quoth the purser, pulling out his tooth-pick; "for if the boats don't pick him up, the sharks will! Naething's ever lost! Na, na, don't be unhappy for that—not a morsel of him!"

For a moment I turned round and looked at the purser in astonishment. I began to consi-

der whether this was a reality, or some frightful hallucination, which had falsely placed me amongst such a set of "old men of the sea." At this moment the boat shoved off, and I could just see the struggling seaman appearing every now and then on the water.

"There lies your man," said J, pointing in the seaman's direction, to the midshipman in the boat.

"Mr. M'Donnel, no one is allowed to stand on the signal-lockers," cried the captain.

"What then," thought I, "can it be a crime to render the saving of life more certain?"

However, I quitted the post I had taken for the sake of the more extended view, and walking forward to the forecastle, where I thought I might be allowed a peep, had the satisfaction of seeing the poor fellow, thanks to his own courage and good limbs, picked up.

As I was quite sure how exhausted he must be, I walked to the gangway, and gave directions that he might be taken below. Though

as brown as a berry when he fell into the water, his countenance now wore the pale ashy hue of inanition. The top-sails had been reefed, the ship hove-to, and the watch long since called. The captain only waited on deck till he saw that the main-topman, Beckett, was safe on board. As he went down the ladder to his own cabin, I heard him say to his first lieutenant, "See that you put that man into the report." But these words, in general so ominous on board a man-of-war, fell unheeded on my ear, taken up as I was with seeing Beckett carefully handed below, and giving instructions that his hammock should be unstowed.

With the usual attentions the poor fellow was restored; he was put into the sick list for that night, as a mere matter of form, that he might not be disturbed to keep watch; and expressing himself quite well on the following morning, his name was discharged.

On reporting the sick list on the quarter-deck, I was told that morning and evening re-

ports were not sufficient for the commander of a small brig ; but that, with the responsibility of the health of so many men resting upon his shoulders, he must require a third report of the sick list at noon, the other two being delivered at the nine o'clock daily muster by divisions, and at six o'clock quarters.

Having made a low bow, and muttered to myself, "What a precious humbug !" I was about to retire from the presence of the great man on whom the responsibility weighed so heavily.

"But sir," said the commander, "I don't see the name of Beckett in the list !"

"No, poor fellow ! He, sir, has expressed a wish to return to his duty to-day ; to which I consented, as he seemed nearly recovered."

"I will thank you, sir, not to *poor fellow* any of my men. My crew, sir, stand in need of unsolicited compassion from no one."

I bowed again, though I could willingly have sent the speaker to the lowest abyss of — ; but no matter what. "Then, Mr. O'Donnel,"

continued he, "I am to understand you that Beckett is returned as fit to do his duty?"

"He is, sir."

"My good Mr. Hawkins," turning to the first lieutenant, who stood beside us on the quarter-deck, "let the gratings be rigged for punishment at six bells."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Mr. Hawkins; and the commander went below.

"What is the meaning of all this?" I demanded, turning to the first lieutenant.

"I can't say, Mr. O'Donnel," returned he sulkily; but I saw that he could say, but would not: so, heartily sick of the hour that had brought me my promotion amid such a set of fellows, I swore, like Falstaff, that I would scorn to "walk through Coventry with them," and proceeded below.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I would you
Had kneeled, my lord, to ask me mercy, and
That at my bidding you could so stand up.”

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

“ THIS promises but unhappily for me,” muttered I, the vivid contrast between the brig and the Epaminondas being brought before my eye so strikingly at every step ; “ and here comes a punishment, to crown it all, on the second day of my coming aboard ! I wonder who is to be the sufferer ? At any rate not I.”

For a moment a vague suspicion flashed across my mind, but it seemed so outrageous, so in-

famous, that it was at once discarded, as too gross for the most common sense person to entertain.

Going into my cabin, and getting ready my full uniform, which, from all I had heard of my new commander, I rightly guessed to be a thing he required, I took up a book, read on till five bells, half an hour before the appointed time, and exactly at eleven, when I heard the boatswain's cry of all hands, I walked to the quarter-deck, where the officers were already assembled.

There is something in punishment on board a ship of the British navy, which makes it by far the most solemn, heart-chilling spectacle of all which take place upon that sad theatre, or, as Caustic had so well termed it, "floating stage." The castigation is itself so severe, and so surely more or less diffuses its heavy spirit over the hearts of all concerned, spectators or sufferers, that going into action is mere holiday sport compared to it.

To the culprit this must evidently be the case. The captain can or ought to feel scarcely less. The warmest sympathies of the men naturally make it a torturing exhibition to them; and what officer of any worth is able to help shuddering at its dread necessity? I never saw these feelings more strongly manifested than in the present case. Still I was ignorant as to who was the ram caught in the thicket. Judge then of my immeasurable astonishment at hearing the captain say—

“William Beckett.”

“Here, sir,” replied the young petty officer.

“Strip,” said his superior.

For a moment the noble-hearted fellow's face grew like what it was when I saw him hauled up the side on the preceding evening. He looked at his commander in perfect bewilderment—then at the surrounding circle of officers on the quarter-deck—at the throng of his shipmates behind; and, as if this preparatory inspection had been necessary to summon

his energies to say a word in defence, before his accusation was even made, he opened his lips to speak.

“Strip!” cried the commander, stamping on the deck.

With that word the poor fellow's spirit seemed cowed. He no longer attempted to hammer out a syllable, but, untying his neck-cloth, took off his jacket. The master-at-arms advanced to receive them from him, and helped to rid him of his checked shirt; and I thought, as I saw his symmetrical limbs burning in the hot sun, that a more nobly made fellow, or one more likely to do the king good service, I had never beheld.

“Seize him up!” said the commander.

The foxes of rope-yarn were produced, and in a few minutes he was lashed by the knees and elbows to the gratings. Every one was looking on in a state of surprise and amazement not very usual at punishments, while on the countenances of the crew I read the boiling but

suppressed wrath of men stung to the last pitch of indignation by tyranny, and in that ripe state of mutiny when the slightest accident will produce the worst results.

The Epaminondas, meanwhile, was on our weather bow, and I could not help thinking, as my eye caught her well-set sails, how little her kind-hearted captain could imagine the scene acting, and so immediately within his neighbourhood.

There was now a dead pause for a few seconds ; the first lieutenant alone seemed in the secret, and indifferent to the scene. The captain held in his hand the articles of war, seemingly at a loss to know which it was that had been broken. At last he said—

“ John Beckett, I am going to flog you.”

“ What for, sir ? I’ve done nothing that I know of, sir, except having the misfortune to fall overboard ; and I hope your honour’s not going to flog me for that ?”

“ No, sir, not for falling overboard ; but for quitting the ship without leave.”

When this sentence was pronounced, there was a distinct groan from among the men. The captain looked at them for a moment; but as no one stirred, or could be detected individually prominent in this insubordinate expression of their feelings, the commander read the general article of war, which authorises the punishment of offences not specifically named, and then called out,

“Boatswain’s mate, do your duty.”

As this order was given, I looked around me.

“Can it be possible,” I said, “that this infamous oppression should be allowed, and not one of his junior officers attempt to remonstrate with such a brute?”

Not one showed the least disposition to interfere. Determined it should never be said that I was discouraged, I stepped out of the circle of my fellow pacers of the quarter-deck, while yet the boatswain’s mate was taking off his jacket with as much slowness and reluctance as he

dared to show, and touching my hat to the commander, addressed him as follows :

“ Before the punishment of this man is carried into effect, sir, permit me to remark that I was observing him at the very moment of his fall, and I am sure that it was not only quite accidental, but was solely the consequence of his endeavour to discharge his duties in the most smart and expeditious manner.”

“ Do you find it, sir, in your instructions,” replied the commander, “ to interfere in the daily duty of the ship, or advise your superiors, unasked, as to who requires punishment or not ? ”

“ No, sir, I do not ; but common humanity——”

“ Fall back, sir. Boatswain’s mate, proceed ! ”

“ At any rate, sir,” returned I, “ it is perfectly in accordance with the instructions you have mentioned that I should now remark to you that this man’s strength is not sufficiently

restored to allow of his taking such a station at the gangway."

"Then, sir, the responsibility be upon your shoulders, for allowing a man out of the sick list before the proper time."

Another groan from the men here broke in upon my remonstrance, and the commander drawing a pistol from his pocket, levelled it at the head of the boatswain's mate, crying out,

"Proceed!"

"If," thought I, "my interference goes any farther, and the men break out into some sudden act of mutiny, I may not only become implicated in it, but, instead of one man being unjustly flogged, many innocent lives will be sacrificed."

Whish!—through the air rang the first lash of the boatswain's mate. It fell with its blood-marked stain upon the guiltless back, and inflicted on the poor fellow's heart a degradation no future kindness could obliterate. I did not openly call on heaven for ever to curse and

blast the wretch who had thus abused his arbitrary power; but the aspirations of my bosom were not the less fervent for their want of utterance.

Without a sigh or murmur, Beckett received two dozen—each from the hand of a fresh mate; at the third, the boatswain himself, a tall, herculean fellow, was called upon to take his part, and at his first lash the head of the sufferer, which had hitherto remained fixed on the heavens, as if there imploring the mercy denied to him on earth, fell back listless on the right shoulder, as pale as death.

“Stop, sir!” cried I, almost choking with rage as the stroke was about to be repeated; “the man has fainted. May he be cast off now, sir?” turning to the commander.

“No,” said the latter, “let him have some water where he stands.”

“Water, sir,” said I, “is not sufficient to support nature under such a violation of her

system. I feel compelled to order him some wine. If you refuse it, sir, the responsibility of what happens must rest with you."

Another groan arose from the men, but the commander, grasping his pistol, seemed not to hear it. The wine was brought—the man revived—the punishment was renewed! At the end of the third dozen the commander ordered him to be cast off.

"It is fortunate you have done so, sir," said I, "for very little more, and I would not have answered for his life."

"I wish I'd known that you were going to say that," replied the scoundrel, "I'd have given him another dozen. But you shall answer for your conduct this day, sir."

"Yes, sir," replied I, significantly, "we must both do that at some time or another, however distant the day may be."

"Consider yourself under arrest, sir."

"With pleasure, sir. It is the most valuable

consideration I have received since entering the service."

Leaving the tyrannical wretch with these words, I walked below, lost in wonder in my own mind how the same service could produce two such opposite specimens as himself and Captain Howard. Nor was my disgust much less at the conduct of my brother juniors than at their superior. I felt that they must be the most abject beings under the sun, to witness such infamous outrages without remonstrance, or, finding this ineffectual, without at least quitting the sphere of their perpetration.

CHAPTER XII.

“As I am an honest man, he looks pale: art thou sick or angry?”

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

As far as regarded my arrest, for that I cared nothing; I knew that it could not last long, as during its continuance I was determined to do no more duty than such as exactly suited myself. My first care was to see to Beckett, in whom typhoid symptoms began to show themselves, and for some hours I never expected anything but a fatal termination to them. By

the greatest attention, however, and the strongest support that art or medicine could afford, he was got out of death's hungry claws that so itched to be at him, and promised to do well.

On the evening of my arrest, the commander himself began to feel that, notwithstanding all his demon-like brutality, he was as much a mortal as the meanest of his men, and sent me a message to say that he was very ill, and desired my attendance in the cabin. In reply, I sent to tell him that I was sorry I could do nothing for him, as I was under arrest. Orders now came by the first lieutenant to command my return to my duty; so putting my lancets into my pocket, I went to the commander's cot, firmly determined that as he had shown me the over-exercise of his power, he should in turn feel that of mine.

He complained of sickness and headach. The fact was, he had been drinking too freely,

and was now labouring under strong febrile symptoms.

“ I hope, sir,” said I, gravely shaking my head, “ that you’re not going to be my first yellow fever patient !”

The blood left his heated countenance as I pronounced these words, and his wrists trembled as he replied—

“ God forbid !”

“ Yes,” thought I, “ you call upon that awful name in your extremity, when you could not remember his divinest attribute of mercy in that of another.”

“ What would you recommend, doctor ?” he inquired, in what was intended for a conciliatory tone.

“ Extensive blood-letting, sir,” I replied.

He looked at me for a moment, and then, as if some suspicion of my purpose came across him, he answered—

“ I cannot submit to that, sir ! Is there no other alternative ?”

“O yes, sir, you can die quietly—at your leisure, as it were!”

Here the sweat broke out upon his forehead, and attempting to assume his usual quarter-deck-air, he said—

“Remember, sir, the life of your captain is in your hands, and you are responsible for it!”

“In the sight of heaven I am, sir; but then the life of a captain of a ship is of no more value than that of the captain of his main-top.”

He winced as I struck him home, and then demanded if there was no medicine that would answer the same purpose as bleeding?

“O yes, certainly, sir, if you choose to take it.”

“I will—let it be made up and sent to me immediately.”

“Very good sir,” said I, leaving the cabin to prepare it.

Now as I saw that, beyond the febrile

results of drinking, there was not much the matter with him, I determined to practise in equity as well as medicine. With this view, I made for him a mixture of colchicum, digitalis, and tartrate of antimony, each dose containing a sixth of a grain of the last, forty minims of the wine of the first, and twenty drops of the tincture of the second—to be taken every five hours.

Thirty minutes after taking the first portion, violent retching came on, and that subsiding, a deadly nausea, which at once cured him of his fever it is true, but prostrated every energy of mind and body. The commander, thinking that this was merely the increase of his illness, took dose the third a little before the time, and then becoming instantly alive to the increase of his sufferings, sent for me and accused me of having given him poison.

“It is perfectly true, sir,” was my reply, “that I have given you poison, and even more than that—I have given you three poisons,

each of them of the most deadly that we know."

"You shall answer this, sir, with your life."

"I am quite prepared to do so."

"Heavens! then I'm a dead man."

"Not quite, sir," said I, very gravely; "even yet you may recover—if you live long enough."

"And if I do, sir, by all I hold sacred I'll try you by a court-martial for poisoning me."

"With all my heart, sir; only be pleased to remember that I proposed bleeding, and this medicine was your own choice. And as for the matter of poisoning, perhaps in the whole pharmacopœia you can scarcely find a dozen effective medicines which are *not* poisons."

"Go, sir, and get me some antidote."

"Thank you, sir; but, after what's passed, I must decline giving you any more medicines whatever."

"You don't mean me, then, to lie in this state?"

“ Yes, I do, sir ; and if it only lasts long enough, I have no doubt you’ll experience the benefit of it.”

On hearing this, the ‘captain grinned in idle rage. The first lieutenant was summoned, and I was once more put under arrest. Going below to my cabin, I enjoyed a hearty laugh, laid me down on my cot, and went off into a sound, refreshing sleep.

The captain took no more of my medicines, and by the following morning was so much better as to be quite alive to the important fact that he might yet recover—if he lived long enough !

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Ford’s a knave ! and I will aggravate his style.”

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

WE had now arrived at Martinique, and there found the admiral and his squadron deeply engaged in military operations. The *Epaminondas* had come to an anchor some six hours before us, and I was yet meditating how I was to get on board her, when two boats came alongside the brig at one and the same moment. One was from the flag-ship, and contained a brother of the lancet, who informed me that my promotion was counter-ordered, or, in other words, that my acting order was not to be confirmed,

since he, being the admiral's *protégé*, had received the vacancy, and was sent to supersede me. The other boat was one from the Epaminondas, sent to carry me on board my old ship.

Never in this world was preferment more gladly resigned. With a celerity I had ever been unable to attain before, my chest was packed, my charge delivered over to my successor, my arrest terminated, and myself, despite my late detested commander, set free.

On arriving on board the frigate, I almost embraced Captain Howard and Caustic. It was like awakening from a frightful attack of nightmare. I could scarcely believe in the truth of my emancipation, while they could scarcely credit the account I gave of my late tortures.

They both, however, as some amends for the privation of my promotion, appointed me to the land brigade which the Epaminondas was ordered to contribute, towards the besieging forces. This was to me the most delightful

news that, next to my late disrating, I could have heard.

The warm shake of the hand that old Caustic gave me, and his look of restored health, was no slight pleasure either ; and while the combatant part of the new brigade were sharpening cutlasses, oiling pistol locks, filling canteens, stowing rations, and making every other prudent preparation for the cutting of throats, we civilians retired below to take measures for the sewing of them up again ; and, by way of supporting ourselves for this trying part, ordered luncheon, and sat down to claret and chat.

When I told Caustic the way in which I had worked the sick tyrant of a commander, he seemed mightily amused, and, in his own quiet way, observed—

“ Sir, if that was not keeping up the power of the medical profession, I am much mistaken. Shakspeare himself would have commended the genius that could so improve on his

‘ Apothecary culling of simples !’

‘ Sharp misery had worn him to the bone !’ so says you, ‘ That if a man did want a poison now !’ Egad, sir, ’twas a great improvement in toxology to let a man feel all the horrors of poisoning, without tasting the release of death !”

“ Why, as for that, sir, he was like a greedy trustee ; though the trust, he said, was a sore one, a release was the last thing he wanted.”

“ At any rate, sir, ’twas good practice—lowered the action of the heart, no doubt, almost as quickly as the lancet.”

“ Why, sir, it *would* no doubt—if he had *had one*—as it was, his pulse fell to fifty.”

“ And a very liberal pulse, too, to allow to such a blackguard ! ’Tis almost a pity, sir, that there *is* a prejudice against poisoning such people altogether. A little *liquor arsenicalis* would in such a case have benefited the service and humanity very greatly.”

“ Oh, Dr. Caustic ! — that’s going a great length !”

“ As I live, sir, it would—ay, and have acted far more quickly than a court-martial.”

“ Well, sir, that’s a branch of practice I’d rather let alone.”

“ ‘Tut, sir, I’ve seen many a nobler-hearted dog get his quietus by it, and neither judge nor jury troubled. But when philosophy, Bismillah ! gains ground among us, we shall take off such fellows as coolly as we now do ragged stumps !”

“ Oh Dr. Caustic !”

“ Ay, sir, we shall—Inshallah ! so would I be glad to do without a scruple—of anything but belladonna, ay, or opium, just as the case might be. *Then*, sir, will arise the splendid days of the profession ! We shall be at once judges in equity, and practitioners in physic. The personal familiarities of Jack Ketch become matters of tradition—the pressyard of Newgate a distillery for laurel-water — and death’s head and cross-bones the badge of a

new order ! Egad, sir, if they'd only make me president of the new college, give me a council composed of the leading professors of poisoning, with a knighthood, K.D.H.C.B., and give me *a good pension*—for all my virtues are of so *sterling* a cast, I can do nothing without *that* !—in such a case I would undertake to poison the new world, or clear off the United States, at a figure most incomparably low !—I think, on a nice calculation, somewhere about twenty a penny—no more than the old women charge for brandy-balls at Bartholomew Fair ! There would be a saving ! We should have no more going to war—none of this dirty, desultory, butcher-like slashing. The king would speak out plainly what he wanted, saying to his parliament, ‘Go poison me the French.’ And away we should trot ! an army of doctors, and a fleet’s load of ratsbane. Then, sir, after fertilizing France with the bodies of her children, with what pride should we not return to Eng-

land, to be called the saviours of our country, and so covered with medals, that each man of us would require to have a wheelbarrow trailed after him in public, in order that they might be duly exhibited and displayed ! O, sir, that will be a proud and happy day—for those who live to see it ! The pleasure of a glass of wine. Long live Physic ! Talking of the royal art, by the way, when we parted, you left me in one cot, and Captain Howard in the other. That was a funny affair that duel, and a narrow escape he had !—soon as he's managed to get over it. Did you know how it originated ?”

“ Not in the least, sir ; but I suppose that, like other secrets, it has transpired by this time ?”

“ O, of course ; the grand ingredient of a secret, you're aware, is this—that everybody has the happiness to find out what it is not worth the while of anybody to know. This, then, being a secret in the strictest sense of the word, you

shall have the whole of it. My worthy assistant, Dr. Andrew, superseded you, it seems, at Barbadoes, to carry letters to Mrs. — , which he did daily till our departure. The lady's mother had found out her little platonicisms with Captain Howard, and threatened, if they did not cease, to acquaint the ace of clubs with them."

"What ! her husband?"

"Exactly. This forced the lady to stay at home, and the captain to condole with the fair prisoner ; while the only channel they could find for their correspondence—for the Platonic system is worth nothing, unless it's well carried out—was that of her child's new doctor. Well, sir, I suppose, in quality of a lay physician, Howard met this scientific lady every evening in her garden. But, unfortunately, she was not only a convert to Plato's system, but one of its teachers ; and, previous to the appearance of so elegant a disciple as the gallant Captain

Howard, she had taken to give Peripatetic lectures to Colonel D——. This officer, finding that his instructress had cooled in the zeal she once displayed for the propagation of her favourite tenets, he, with the acumen natural to a philosopher, set about investigating the cause. He soon learnt, from various reports, enough to awaken his suspicions. He wrote one or two notes, but, getting no satisfactory answer, repaired to that favourite bower where he had so often passed an hour with his fair Platonica. Here, as he had expected, he found Captain Howard; and as, however fond of *Plato*, they had not yet learned to emulate *Cato*, so, instead of cool argument and mild ratiocination, they proceeded to high words, and the result was the duel which you witnessed."

"Then what said the husband?"

"Just what a man wholly ignorant of the affair should say—nothing!"

"Is it possible that he was the only being who remained in the dark?"

“Ay, and a very proper place for him, O’Donnel.”

“*Heu mihi!* Well, I’m glad that Captain Howard escaped so well out of the affair, and the next time he turns philosopher, I hope it will be for a philosophy of a less dangerous persuasion. I should have taken it equally kind of Fate though, had she spared me that pretty specimen of promotion.”

A message from the first lieutenant here announced the departure of the boats which were to convey our land brigade to the shore. Caus-
tic accompanied me thus far, and having seen us safely disembarked, took his way back to the ship.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Did he so often lodge in open field,
In winter’s cold, and summer’s parching heat,
To conquer France ?”

HENRY VI.

OUR arrival had been just in the very nick of time. Hostilities had just commenced, but gone no length that made us regret lost time. The expedition had of course directed itself against the town of Fort Royal, the capital of the island.

Towards the taking of the vast and impregnable works by which this was protected, it

became necessary for us, as a preliminary step, to silence, or rather take a little island, whose battery commanded the bay. A neighbouring height, however, called Morne Vanier, in turn commanded this island; and here, on the evening before our arrival, a mortar had been placed, and, being well served on the ensuing morning, roused the Frenchmen from their beds with a *réveillé*—certainly not of the most amusing kind.

We next had to land our artillery; in which work, and those of a similar nature, the land brigade of the Epaminondas was with others employed. A post captain of considerable experience, who had just hoisted a broad pendant, and received the rank of a brigadier-general, superintended the whole of the amphibious department of the besiegers; and, despite of every obstacle which nature and the enemy opposed to our design, we cut out for ourselves a new road through the thickly-wooded sides of the height, and having made fast a

hawser on its summit, we set to work with our tackles.

Amid heavy rain, the deep mire of an unseasoned road, and the almost impassable steepness which characterized it, the ardour of our men carried us triumphantly over everything. After the long time which they had spent cooped up in their wooden citadels, it seemed as if there was no one thing on earth which could delight them more than their present arduous undertaking. No spur did they need; but with heart and hand, as frisky as young colts, they cheered each other on, bandied their jokes from mouth to mouth, and held the island already captured. In a day or two we had got up some respectable works; and desirous that our friends in the pigeon-holes, as Jack phrased a particular battery, should be aware that we treated them with all respect, a day was named for the shooting-match to come off.

The said match was to begin on our part some two or three hours before sunset; and

when that orb returned, giving birth to another day, it added to the possessions of the British crown the fortress in question. Indeed, the navy, as far as the affair had gone, had done their part nobly, and it was now the army's turn to get a share of the laurels. General P——t, having given battle and defeat to the French in a most obstinate action, tried to carry some works which were commanded by the largest fortress on the island: that, namely, of Fort Bourbon. Here, however, the determined valour of the besieged gave a temporary check to our career, and we once more prepared to take to the hammer and long line. I might make use of a more expressive and familiar phrase, but the dignity of an historian requires to be supported.

By this time the French commander-in-chief, who was no other than Admiral Villaret, perceived how great was the probability that he should go to the wall. Resolved, however, if possible, to save his bacon, he gathered together

his brave defenders, and, cutting his stick, retired within Fort Bourbon. Here, as you may have already imagined, he had stored up all the provender and victuals on which his hands could be laid ; and thinking the stronghold itself might defy even English sailors, he said within himself, “ Rot them ! let them stay outside, and be carried off by the fever.”

Previous, however, to his taking a step so important to his country and himself, and determining on it in language so elegant and refined, a slight event occurred, of still more importance to my reader, and to me.

CHAPTER XV.

“Early and late debating to and fro,
How France and Frenchmen might be kept in awe.”

SHAKSPEARE.

Our worthy captain, being taken with an extraordinary degree of zeal to the military department, was not content with simply discharging the part allotted to the generality of the landed seamen, but, in all the eagerness of a child with a new toy, courted the acquaintance of the soldiers, and contrived to thrust himself and his battalion forward, for any piece of service that happened to hold out an extra promise of a broken head.

In this chivalric spirit he undertook to hold an outpost which had been taken from the enemy, and which was the nearest advanced to their lines. The night was dark and tempestuous, and the rain fell in those tremendous torrents which can only be imagined by travellers in a tropical climate. The officers had erected a rude kind of shed in the rear of their chain of sentinels, and here, by the help of a few embers, a bottle of grog, some rations, and many stories, we contrived to kill the best part of the night.

Towards two o'clock in the morning the captain expressed an inclination to sit down and doze; but before he would allow himself this indulgence he departed on his round, to see that everything in his charge was secure. His juniors of course rose to go with him, leaving me alone. This interval I conceived I should be wise in employing for the arrangements of my own nap. I had hardly, however, got myself as comfortably settled as our rude quarters

would permit, and my eye-lids were not yet settling themselves steadily for sleep, when I heard a faint footstep. I listened—another succeeded—a shadow appeared in the dim light of the doorway, and a tall powerful man stealthily paced into our shieling; with the wariness of an accomplished rogue, I saw him bend his head down and listen attentively for any sound, having his right hand at the same time in his belt, which I therefore imagined to contain his arms.

Opening my mouth as wide as possible, that this armed intruder might not be able to detect my breathing, I watched him prowling around in quest of something worth stealing. Convinced, seemingly, that he was alone, he approached the dying embers of our watch-fire, and kneeling down, applied his lips to blow them into a flame. Another moment, and I should be discovered: what was to be done? where were my comrades' arms? How foolish had I been, in the midst of war and slaughter, to coil

myself down for sleep, as unthinkingly as if in the cockpit of the Epaminondas ! While these thoughts chased themselves rapidly through my mind, the assiduous breathing of my secret foe rekindled the fading wood.

With gentle progress the dull red glow increased to a vivid glare : it went and came like lightning, in the deep shadows that surrounded us, and as each fitful gleam arose, it fell just on one feature of the stranger, and then on another. Now I thought he was a negro ; now a French tirailleur—as first a scowling eye appeared, and then a bold prominent nose. Yet his uniform—no, it could not be uniform—I could make nothing from his appearance.

I looked round to see if the flitting light would reveal a weapon of defence ; no, I could perceive none ; neither, though I strove with all the excitement of the moment, could I remember where it was I had seen a heap of swords and pistols lying ; while my perverse

and treacherous memory persisted in representing them as directly on the other side of the shed, from which I was of course shut off. At this moment my strained nerves detected the approaching footsteps of my shipmates. But my expectations were in a moment dashed.

The stranger too had heard the noise, and, partly starting from his low attitude, remained listening to the increasing sound. His effort had, however, at last been successful; a small bright flame rose from the glowing embers, and flickered as if uncertain of its own existence. With a start of surprise the stranger turned his head towards it, and there, to my utter bewilderment, I beheld the never-to-be-forgotten features of the detested Donaghue.

Uttering an inspiriting cry, I sprang upon him. But my strength opposed to his was like that of a child. He put me from him with one hand, and drawing a pistol with the other, rushed towards the entrance, I still struggling,

but in vain, to hold him back. In the mean time, the sound of my voice had induced our approaching party to hasten towards the bivouac. A midshipman was the first who presented himself at the doorway, and indeed on the very muzzle of the ruffian's pistol. I saw what was to follow, and dashed forward to beat up his right arm; but, ere I could effect my purpose, the whole contents of the charge had crashed through the poor lad's brain. His corpse, no longer an impeding obstacle, fell resistless to the ground, and away sprang the murderer over it, leaving the fragments of his clothing in my hands, and I following him.

In vain I now heard voices behind me, shouting aloud my name; in vain it flashed across me that I was plunging into the centre of the enemy's lines: I only saw before me the flying assassin of Kathleen, and considered not the impossibility of my overtaking one whose more practised foot had always eluded me, or the absurdity of an unarmed youth chasing a

far more powerful person, bristling with weapons to the very teeth.

A very brief space elapsed before I perfectly lost sight of the villain I was pursuing, and a bayonet presented to my breast arrested further progress—I was a prisoner. But I did not regret it. I had at least learnt that some temporary and extraordinary fortune, which so often and so inscrutably preserves the repose of mankind, had interfered to save the life of my detested foe; and while I knew his worthless life to be spared, there was still a motive for saving my own, in trying to wring from him the secret of guilt, even if I failed to bring upon him his deserved punishment.

Having quietly given myself up, I was led away to the officer of the picquet by which I was taken. To him I stated my profession, and the circumstances which led to my capture, describing Donaghue as a scoundrel who had greatly wronged my family; of whose existence I had till that night entertained the greatest

doubts ; who was, moreover, a suspected murderer, in arms against his country, a traitor of the deepest dye in every way, and one of whom I now sought any intelligence they could give me.

This statement having been very civilly received, I was next forwarded to the colonel of the regiment to whom the picquet belonged ; and having been allowed some rest, this officer received me during the poor apology for a breakfast, at which he seated himself at six o'clock. Like the subaltern at the picquet, whatever might be his feeling, his courtesy was unexceptionable, and having made me repeat my story, he expressed the great happiness he and his commander-in-chief would have in furthering my search to every extent in their power ; and as for being a prisoner, that should be obviated by my being allowed parole.

On hearing these kind intentions so expressed, my gratitude of course knew no bounds, and, full of admiration at the gene-

rosity of my foe, I poured forth all my thanks. The colonel heard me to an end, and then smiling, replied :—

“Of course, monsieur’s good feelings will dictate a suitable politeness in reply, and put at the disposal of the governor any little information he may possess, as to the disposition, forces, and so on, of his brave countrymen.”

“And is this, sir,” said I, “the price at which your assistance and parole are to be granted to me?”

The colonel shrugged his shoulders in reply.

“Then allow me to tell you, colonel, that I will accept of no parole from you ; and deep as my stake is in that traitor’s discovery, his name, while I remain your prisoner, shall never pass my lips again upon such an understanding.”

On hearing this, the colonel bowed, expressed his hopes that I should alter my decision, and saying his duties required his presence, left me alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Here are our articles of contracted peace
Between our sovereign and the French.”

SHAKSPEARE.

It was on the day after my capture that Villaret determined on abandoning Fort Edward, or République,—as it went by both or either of these designations. Convinced in his own mind that Fort Bourbon was impregnable, and that from its commanding Fort République, he could at any time drive out from the shelter of the latter whoever should venture to occupy it, he took the bold measure of spiking and dismantling its guns, and shutting himself

within Fort Dessaix,—as Bourbon had been rechristened after the battle of Marengo. Here, then, he resolved to trust that time and climate would provide sufficient allies to destroy his besiegers and set him free.

“Well, old boy,” thought I, “you may have a very good idea of yourself; but you should have been a little more accustomed to British operations before you came to this conclusion. I do not feel the weight of my captivity to be very oppressive, under all the aspects of the case.”

Soon after these self-consolatory conclusions, the governor, as if their strength was to be quickly tried, sent for me to his presence. In a more gentle way he repeated the proposal of his junior officer. Not an iota would I of course give in, and though I bitterly felt that my captivity had operated in a manner so contrary to that which I had expected—the tracking out of Donaghue—still, as a matter of course as well as feeling, the alternative was not even for a moment to be glanced at.

Very little time was now lost by my countrymen in proving to the French how complete was the blunder they had committed. One fine morning, as daylight broke, what should the garrison of Bourbon see, but the glorious old English ensign floating proudly from Fort République. Now was the time for Villaret to prove the correctness of his calculation; and to effect this no effort was spared. The French engineers gained an opportunity of displaying all their skill, which certainly nothing could surpass; for the most incessant shower of every kind of missile that could be hurled from guns and mortars, was thrown continuously for two days upon the devoted République; and if no other damage was done, we had ocular proof that its buildings at any rate were reduced to a heap of rubbish.

The masonry of the fortress itself, being of a far more solid description, resisted the iron of its late rulers to a much greater degree, and appeared to have received little material injury.

Further than this, we were unable to judge what loss the English had sustained; since, for the space I have mentioned, not a shot was returned to all the heavy firing of the French; and, with the exception of a few observers, no one was to be seen.

At last, another order of things occurred: my countrymen had evidently unspiked the cannon and mortars, and from that time sent forth a shower of shot and shells that rendered Bourbon too warm to be safe. It was now Villaret's turn to be surprised, and this feeling in his bosom was by no means allowed to sleep. A new battery was quickly opened within a good hard-hitting range, by the river Monsieur; and every little fort around, that the French had evacuated, was rapidly put into effective order, and made to pour forth its fire and fury on its old masters.

In all these works the navy were most conspicuous, and, not content with their general services, once more had recourse to their old

plan, and dragged up the high hill of Tartanson all the heaviest metal they possessed.

Being left at liberty to range the fort at will, I used occasionally to imagine that I could recognise the figures of some of my old shipmates engaged in this work, more particularly that of Captain Howard ; but this might have been mere fancy.

Admiral Villaret was now, too late, aware of the wrong step he had taken. Already the slaughter among his men had been prodigious ; though this was far from having reached the point to which it would undoubtedly attain, so soon as the besiegers should see fit to open on their enemies all the works which they had so continuously and industriously constructed. Already the barracks and the quarters of the men and officers were a mere pile of ruins, and the only places of security were found in the arched and covered ways that traversed the fort in various directions ; and even these, where, from damp and neglect, the masonry had become

imperfective, were insufficient to keep out the fast falling shells ; and wherever one of these did penetrate, the slaughter was tremendous.

When I beheld how numerous and increasing was the sad number of the wounded, I immediately tendered my services, both as a matter of policy and humanity. They were accepted with many thanks, and, amid the rapidly augmenting horrors of the siege, I had at least the pleasure of knowing that my presence was useful to those whom the fortune of war had placed beyond the reach of further enmity.

As it had of course been an object with Villaret not to feed more mouths than possible, my brother prisoners were very few in number, and these, like myself, officers in their various stations. When we saw how the war was going, we spared no congratulation, one with the other, respecting our approaching liberty ; and, but for the havoc that went on around us, I have never spent a more pleasant time than this brief interval of captivity. By

daybreak in the morning we were up to watch what progress our brothers in arms had made since the night before, nor was it generally till midnight that we drank success to the British standard, and separated for our various cells.

This life was not, however, without its imminent dangers; and as frequent escapes brought on fool-hardiness, one of our number had his head knocked completely from his shoulders by the falling of a shell, another being mortally and two severely wounded by the bursting of others. Thus were we situated in Fort Bourbon, when a flag of truce arrived, summoning Villaret to surrender. A more exciting and anxious moment of suspense than this proved to our little band of prisoners, cannot well be imagined.

With the most breathless anxiety, we waited during the few minutes which sufficed to convey the message to the governor, and his answer in reply. Would it be favourable to us? O joyous moment that would open our prison-

gates, spare us from a constantly recurring sight of ruin and bloodshed, in which we had neither share nor resistance, and allow us honourably to clasp our old friends, and partake of their triumphs !

Public opinion was divided. Many said it would be accepted ; others that it should ; and some of the most knowing—or, as they themselves phrased it, the best informed—said that it must be accepted. A few there were, however, who shook their heads, as if aware how insecurely these sat upon their bodies ; and mentioning something about the honour of *La Belle France*, thrust their hands deep into their pockets, shrugged their shoulders, and sauntered off upon the ramparts, as if to get out of sight of the flag of truce ; as a man of honourable feeling, high appetite, and no money, might be supposed to turn his back on a restaurateur's window, that could only torment and not appease his hunger.

At a respectful distance, then, from the

officer who bore the flag, we poor prisoners all crowded : he had been admitted by the southwestern sallyport ; and two sentries with loaded muskets stood by, that no one but the officer on guard should hold communication with him. That he might not, however, have to complain of churlish treatment, one of the governor's silver salvers was brought out by two messmen, covered with wine and refreshment : this was placed on the wreck of one of the walls that his own mortars had demolished ; and the messmen tried to show him that there was no lack of provision. The officer whom I imagined to be the bearer of the flag was a young ensign. When the wine, however, made its appearance, he waved his hand, as if giving precedence to some one, and, to my astonishment, forth stepped Captain Howard ; our eyes met, and I immediately bowed. He seemed pleased to see me alive and well, and filling two glasses, gave one to his junior officer ; he then lifted the other slightly in the air, and taking off his hat

with a grace that brought back the olden time of St. Denis and St. George, drank, in a firm voice, to "the freedom of my comrades, and the valour of my foes." As this was uttered in French, and accompanied with a bow, first towards myself and my fellow-prisoners, and then towards the republican officers who confronted us, the latter, touched with the well-timed compliment, lifted their caps, and gave him a hearty cheer, in which, with all my soul, I joined.

"The answer!—the answer!" was now shouted by some of the crowd.

"The general!—the governor!" were the cries that followed.

"Make way for the governor and the guard!" cried the sentries.

All heads were instantly turned towards the advancing tramp of feet, and there we beheld the gallant Villaret approaching, surrounded by his staff, their uniforms, in many instances, reduced to tatters, from the constant splinters

of shot, shell, stone, and mortar; on either side of him filed down his guard, and their imposing appearance bespoke what they were—veterans who had all borne the brunt of the fray.

When Villaret reached within twenty yards of Captain Howard, he gave the word, in a firm, unflinching tone, “Halt!” In an instant his men stood stiff as iron. He then advanced, with his staff following, for four or five paces. Having waved his hand to these, they too became stationary, forming a sort of lunette. Villaret now marched up to Captain Howard, who took three steps to meet him, and was about to raise his cocked-hat, when the governor, stretching out his arm, shook my old captain warmly by the hand; and, after saying that he felt the compliment paid to him by entrusting the flag of truce to so distinguished an officer, looked steadily around him on the affecting circle of his men. He then

elevated his voice, so that all might hear him, and said —

“ Captain Howard, you will bear back my compliments and respects to the able chiefs who have honoured me with the proposal contained in this letter — of an *unqualified surrender*. But however delighted I should be to unite with them in staying the further effusion of blood, there is still a painful duty imposed upon a French commander-in-chief, to which I, and all under me, must bow. My staff, my officers, and my men, have sworn to bury themselves under the ruins of this fort, rather than submit before the very last moment. This, sir, is far distant; and I will only now say, that I admire you too much as enemies not to desire — could the fortunes of war permit it — the pleasure of your acquaintance as friends.”

On hearing this, Captain Howard expressed a regret, the sincerity of which appeared in his countenance. He then shook hands once more

with the general, waved his hand to us, bowed to the circle of French officers, and turned to depart. So completely had his manner prepossessed his opponents, that they gave him another cheer as he left the fortress, and then mounting the horses held by his escort, he and his subaltern spurred off to their lines.

CHAPTER XVII.

“To France—to France, and get what you have lost!”

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the excitement of this little spectacle had subsided, the looks of all told the story of their hearts. War to the knife had been proclaimed, and on whom might not the blow fall? Who was there among us all, that at this moment did not feel the pressure of some gentle tie within his bosom? The link that bound his soft desires and affections to the earth; the note that spoke of some far distant and happy home beyond the

dim blue circle of the surrounding horizon? In some quiet shady valley, perchance of the Pyrenees, were sisters, mothers, wives, children!—all, all of whom might have a stake, and a fearful one, in the issue of the forthcoming and redoubled contest! Nay, come nearer; even in the town of Fort Royal, whose roof-trees were yet within their sight, whose busy hum of life not yet entirely hushed to their hearing, how many good and anxious hearts were sharing their solitudes, and weeping at the thoughts of their prospective woes!

To the dear renewal of these delights, a path, but a few minutes since, seemed fairly open, and now, at the fiat of one man, all had vanished! War, shrouded in his bloody banners, upreared his merciless form between them, and each must pass *sub jugum*, under the yoke. Emotions such as these formed but a tribute due to nature and to feeling, which the bravest heart there paid in the momentary pang that assailed it; and doubtless

in the bosom of Villaret himself this voice of the affections must have been as loud as in that of any. But too much master of his exterior to betray what might be passing in his mind, he seemed only intent upon discharging the increasing duties of his station ; and too well versed in men not to change these impressions of the moment, he whispered a few words to one of his aides-de-camp, and proceeded to put his guard through some of their evolutions, with as much *sang-froid* as if the shattered square of Fort Bourbon were equally pleasant with the unmenaced parade of the *Champs Elysés*.

While he was yet busy in thus diverting the minds of the lookers-on, the remains of his band suddenly burst forth with that most superb national anthem *La Parisienne*. With the swiftness of magic the scene around me seemed to change. The lingering look of baffled hope and incipient doubt appeared to have vanished from the countenances of the soldiery.

As the sublime strains of that soul-stirring music pealed over the ruined walls of the fort, it seemed to inspire them with the defiance which it breathed. Their looks no longer appeared to wander towards the homes that so many of them had seen for the last time, but sought the bustling lines of their foes with that iron determination, which, confident that the worst of the danger was yet to come, seemed sternly to say, Thou or I must die !

And so it was ; the present interval was but the pause of gathering strength, the lull of a more deadly blast, and every soul of us now knew, that when the present ominous repose of battle should be disturbed, then either party would put forth the utmost force for their opponents' destruction ; and well was such a spirit-stirring strain calculated to nerve them for the coming crisis.

Even I, non-combatant as I was, felt a deep and bitter regret that my place was not with David in "the front of the battle," and, listening to that

noble air, wiser heads and cooler bosoms might be excused for a similar weakness. Passionately devoted as I had ever been to music, the present accompaniments of war and danger in their deepest forms seemed to give that devotion a redoubled strength;—but it was the strength of folly, and, determined to avoid them, I quickly and sadly strode to the ruined caves of our quarters below, where the tempting sounds were unable to follow me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ I have loved her ever since I saw her,
“ And still I see her beautiful. ’

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

IN the annals of most men there needs but little land-mark to designate in their memories those days whose fearful records have been written with violence and in blood. But when these unhappy accompaniments have fallen upon a festival which through the past we have been accustomed to consecrate to sanctity and repose, the contrast at once fixes in our

remembrance every particular of the scene with a depth and tenacity that the future cannot obliterate.

In one part of my service, which does not enter into the scope of these volumes, it was my lot to share in a general engagement which took place on a Saturday evening. The thousand little histories of those eventful hours were for years present to my mind. Time, however, to use the ideas of Bacon, begins to lighten the vivid colours in which they were laid; but the scene which offered itself on the following morning—the sabbath of the week—is fresh;—the mangled bodies waiting on the decks for burial, the half-dried gore upon the shattered bulwarks, the splinters so profusely strewn of oak and iron, the wreck of everything around, which that day had hitherto witnessed in the greatest order.

No solemn call to the sacred exercise of devotion was heard: no muster at divisions in dresses of the most scrupulous cleanliness!

Blood, smoke, and filth seemed to have set their marks on everything, while before the eye lay the striking spectacle of a whole fleet repairing damages: the masts of each vessel crowded with all hands of the crew in working-clothes, which the action of the evening had sadly soiled, sternly intent on fishing masts, knotting rigging, bending sails, and mending gear for sea. Nor was this all: beyond the line of our own fleet there lay the enemy, the picture of ruin. The day before, a hundred sail crowded the bay—now the wreck alone of twenty or thirty remained on its waters.

With feelings precisely similar do I look back at the scene I am now going to describe, and which I, at the present epoch of my story, witnessed in Fort Bourbon. After the decided refusal which we had all heard Villaret give to the proposed surrender, nothing was, of course, expected, but the most deadly opening of a concentrated fire from all the guns that could be brought to bear on us.

In expectation of this, the garrison were busy, making every possible preparation. The sabbath had dawned, but brought with it no symbol of its sacred character. Whole companies of soldiers were to be seen removing the largest stones from the ruins of the barracks and buildings which the English shell and shot had demolished, and taking them to repair the breaches and dilapidations in the arched and covered ways; others were busy carrying the various heaps of shot to be distributed around the ramparts; some, again, bearing on handbarrows the huge filled bombshells, and placing them in their required stations.

The artillery were chiefly occupied in removing the contents of the grand magazine to a safer spot underground. It is true, that the magazine itself had been built with great care, and arched over with stone, as well as surrounded with high walls; but, as if the English had gained intelligence of its situation, the storm that fell upon it was incessant, so that

the walls around it were knocked to atoms, and the roof of the building itself had become so insecure and battered as to be most dangerous for further occupation, and certainly not the least curious object in architecture that I ever beheld.

Far away, again, from this quarter was to be seen a spectacle equally singular and opposed. Four forges, in full operation, were devoted to heating piles of shot of every size to a red heat, the blacksmiths ranging around them, watching their gloomy charges, so that they might be ready for the work of devastation at any moment; quaffing new rum grog, and singing snatches of various French bacchanal songs, and others even less in keeping with the day and the fate that any moment might overtake them.

With regard to the last, danger and death had become so familiar, that their presence had ceased to alarm; and many a fine fellow did I see knocked over, and a hearty laugh raised at any ridiculous accompaniment of his fall

by the very men who, perhaps, ten minutes afterwards became subjects for the same sad and insane merriment. Even the women were not exceptions, either to the mockers or the mocked ; for I have invariably observed, that in proportion as surrounding circumstances depart from a state of nature, so do the dispositions of human beings connected with them become subject to the violence, until a savage wildness and extravagance is engrafted upon their character, that brings them nearer to the level of demons than of mankind.

As I took my solitary walk among these groups, and contrasted the scene around me with that of the many quiet Sundays I had witnessed in my own once peaceful home—when my memory went to that happy time of childhood, before love, like some brilliant lightning, had blasted my path before me—when I thought of the bright sunshiny walk to the near Protestant church, across a moor whose loveliness nothing, in my eyes, could ever equal ; bloom-

ing gold with the gorse blossom, and blushing purple and crimson with the heather-bell—when I thought how often we had met our neighbours repairing to their chapel, of a different creed, yet both in perfect tolerance—that too rarely cultivated virtue!—when I contrasted the distant chime, the bleating sheep, the rushing of the unseen brook, or the gentle sighing of the fragrant breeze, with the sights and sounds then around, — how my soul sank within me !

Strange fate ! that had brought into the blood, the tumult, and the shock of war, one whose whole nature was devoted to quiet and retirement—which had for ever desolated the feelings of a bosom whose dearest inclinations and hourly yearnings were for the tranquil enjoyments of affection. Ah ! in the wide and weary world, whom had I now to love ? I felt more vividly than ever that the void which Kathleen's death had caused to me could never be refilled. Years had been unable to soothe

away the bitterness of my loss, and the whole object of my life had been changed. I, whose nightly prayer in the pure days of boyhood had been for the life and happiness of those I loved, to me had fallen the lot of seeing them swept from my side, and myself left without an end on earth but the discovery of the destroyer !

Yet was I ever to attain this, and if not, why live ? The tears rose in my eyes as the sad reflection overcame me, and if a passing wish escaped me that the coming scene might end my sorrows and my life together, it was not from ingratitude for past protection, or insensibility to the kindness of the few friends I had been fortunate enough to obtain, but from that temporary weakness of the spirit which sinks in weariness beneath a burden too heavy to be borne always with equanimity.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Often have I struck
Those that I never saw, and struck them dead.”

SHAKSPEARE.

HEAVEN has so happily formed our natures by varied balances of extreme emotions, that the simple fact of any severe burst of grief is in itself a sufficient warranty that a calmer and happier state of mind is approaching. I thought of my kind friends Caustic and Captain Howard, and began to picture to myself how they might be employed. While thus engaged, the day wore away until three o'clock, shortly after

which, at a given signal, every battery under the English orders opened its fire upon us. This took me for the moment so completely by surprise, and produced an effect so grandly imposing, that I remained on the ramparts a quarter of an hour, gazing at the contest, before I perceived how fast the French were falling around me, and to what idle gratuitous risk my own limbs were exposed.

Considering that it would personally be quite as pleasant to retain all the last in their proper positions, as to have them damaged or knocked off by English shot, I retired to our den below. This was lighted by windows sloping to the ground, which no shell could enter, and secured above by a massive arching of prodigious strength and thickness. Here I found all my brother captives engaged in that most dignified and decorous occupation, entitled leapfrog, skipping over each other's backs in a long row down the vast chamber, and making its ribbed arches ring to their shouts

and laughter, even amid all the ceaseless din of the cannon roaring above; for however fiercely the fire of the besiegers might be kept up, that of the besieged still continued to answer it in the most gallant and determined style.

Every now and then a shot would hit the centre edge of one of our portholes, striking in amongst us a volume of mortar-dust and powdered stone, causing a report like that of a cannon discharged at the ear, and a shout of joy from the prisoners within that nearly equalled it. Occasionally too a shell would pitch into the fosse, the view of which we commanded. If it fell into the water of the moat, we all ran to a peep-hole to see it turn up the mud and slime in idle wrath; but if it fell on the stone, we backed to the wall, since, not unfrequently, part of the contents was exploded against the roof of our quarters, and by this means I received a severe contusion on the elbow from a rebounding ball.

“ Well,” thought I, on receiving this rap, “ after all said and done, a bombarded fortress is *not* quite the place for a quiet gentleman of science.”

When my companions saw the blow struck they ran to me, but perceiving no blood they cried out, “ Never mind, doctor !—go it again ! That was kindly meant as a rough way of knocking off our fetters.”

“ Ay, ay,” said I, hopping about with the pain, “ but I hardly know which affects me most, the kindness of the intention, or the precision of it.”

In this happy state we remained four hours ; still not the slightest interruption of the firing took place on either side, though the continued roar and blaze seemed enough to have exhausted the saltpetre mines of India. Darkness having come on, we agreed to make a visit of inspection to the ramparts to “ see the fun.”

“ Ay,” said I, “ and feel it too most likely.”

“ We must take our chance of that,” said a

young ensign, and putting on our caps, away we went ; and fool-hardy as such an expedition undoubtedly was, it immeasurably repaid at least some of us.

Between Fort Bourbon and the lines of its assailants, the heavens seemed arched with a brilliant tracery of fire. Nothing could be more beautiful to behold than the line of light displayed by the progress of a shell, and when a succession continued to be discharged by four or five at a time, on either side, crossing and passing each other harmlessly in the air, each originating in a sudden burst of flame and terminating in the same, some falling before us, others on either side, and the greater number passing over our heads, the effect heightened by the constant roar of cannon, the clang of the guns themselves, the bursting of the shells, the bellowing of commands, and, worst of all, the shrieks of the wounded and the dying—the whole struck home to the heart with

a degree of awful sublimity that nothing could surpass.

Conversation was out of the question; we had taken up a post where we were in the way of no one, and looked at the fearful sight before us in silence and in awe.

At this moment I saw the French carrying some half a dozen red-hot shot from the glowing furnaces, where, as in a little pandemonium, they had been blown into a state of heat. With these they began to load and fire, as fast as possible, a small battery on our left. This being an operation of some danger to all concerned, I watched the process with considerable attention. The load of powder having been put into the gun, with a dry wad after it, a wet wad was next inserted, then a cold shot, and lastly, with a double-handed ladle, a couple of men got in the red-hot ball, and sometimes two of these.

The coolness with which the French artillery-

men stood at the breeches of these guns, and took their aim, was really admirable; for though the insertion of the cold shot greatly diminished the danger, and kept the red-hot gentlemen in a more effective state, still from the overload the guns kicked tremendously, and the possibility of the aimer being knocked to atoms was far from distasteful, while heated iron and gunpowder were so near each other.

Whether it was from this discharge, or that of a shell, I know not, but just at this juncture I saw a belt of undergrowth timber set into a blaze along part of the English works, completely displaying their lines and revealing the trees, under cover of which their batteries had been erected, torn, crushed, ploughed up, and cut in every direction; for through these of course both fires passed. I had now been standing half an hour in this sort of admiring horror, now turning my attention to one quarter and then to another, and I began to think, as I gazed upwards at the linear tracery of fire-

works over head, that we bore a charmed life, like some of the suffering saints, who, in fairy tales, are thrust unharmed into puncheons of vipers and other agreeable company.

At this moment, however, two English shells pitched in the gravel, almost at my toes. "Down," cried I, with the whole strength of my voice, flinging myself, as I spoke, upon my bosom. My friends, who were nearest to me, did the same, all but the young ensign who, whether he had not heard the cry from the stunning confusion of sounds, or whether, from looking in a contrary direction, he had failed to see the shell fall, I know not. A past midshipman who was near, said he did attempt to lie down, but in the act of doing so the missile burst, and part of its upper rim or covering striking him just above the eyes, cut the crown of the poor fellow's head off, with as even a level as if the weapon had been a sabre.

An old lieutenant had lain next me—no one else was hurt, and he, jumping up, looked at

the corse, and shaking his head, exclaimed, "Death vacancies go by seniority. Good evening, gentlemen!"

The example shown, we all quickly followed it, and once more retired to the comparative security of our subterraneous quarters. I had not long been here when I received a message from one of the French staff surgeons, begging me, if possible, to go to the hospital. I of course set off immediately, and found that the number of the wounded had so rapidly increased upon the hands of the surgical staff, as to render my assistance very acceptable.

CHAPTER XX.

“ They say the French Count hath done most honourable service.”

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

THE wounds inflicted through the bursting of shells are generally very dangerous and severe. There is such a vile compound in the loading, that the blows are spread very much on the surface of the body, and the shot or nails just enter far enough to do every mischief, render extraction very difficult, and yet not leave a free opening by passing through.

This severe slaughter was on the side of my

own countrymen much mitigated, for as the ground had been rendered quite soft by the rain, I had at least the consolation of knowing that three-fourths of the shells fired at them had found a quiet grave and harmless explosion in the earth.

When Monday morning arrived, after a night spent on both sides in an unceasing cannonade Villaret discovered that his expense of ammunition had been so great as to have exhausted all his ready-filled cartridges, and, indeed, to have caused them to be expended faster than they could be filled. This naturally produced a slackening of the fire; he therefore resolved to keep silent on Monday, as a sort of breathing-time, that would allow his artillery to make up their lee-way. On Tuesday he began again, and at first maintained a very pretty fire, but the garrison had been so thinned in its numbers, and exhausted by its efforts, that the French disposition to grow weary

of long-continued exertion plainly exhibited itself.

The governor now began to perceive that, despite all the efforts of himself and his staff, the period of his defence was rapidly drawing to a close ; nor, indeed, had he any right to be displeased with his men for the fact. The fort was already like a rabbit-warren. The chief fault had been his, in shutting himself up there, and abandoning Fort Republic ; and he could scarcely expect his soldiers to have any pleasure in flinging away lives that could not even further that chimerical benefit—the fame of their country. They were fairly beaten—over-matched. Sooner or later those vagabonds, the English, would carry their point—perhaps by the bayonet ; and to shed blood for the question of a few hours' occupation of a battered fortress, and nothing more, was too ridiculous.

From the evidence of these truths, rumours

of a capitulation began to circulate on Wednesday. The heavy fire of the English batteries was lazily answered by the besieged; and that evening, while attending the wounded, I thought that a mine must have been sprung below us, and momentarily expected to mount into the air, so great was the concussion of the ground beneath my feet, and the bellowing roar that rocked the fort to its foundations.

My fears fortunately, however, were not realised, but a small and temporary magazine, having been fired by one of the enemy's missiles, had blown up. The English bombardment on this went on, if possible, at a greater rate than ever; but, strange to say, in the evening some accident of the same sort befel them. On the next day, Thursday, General Villaret felt the necessity of sending out himself a similar flag of truce to that lately borne by Captain Howard, whose offer he had declined.

Various rumours were afloat as to the proposed terms; but as we naturally thought that he would try for the most favourable, we were not greatly surprised when we heard of their rejection.

Friday had now arrived, and for five days "the Britishers" had been hammering away at us without rest or interval. Our replies gradually grew weaker. Public opinion among the French soldiery seemed to proclaim that enough had been done both for their own honour and that of their country, and I beheld the novel spectacle of the semi-tacit expression of the sentiments of the soldiers fairly bear down the predisposition of their chief.

In our service the men would have been put up and knocked on the head like so many sheep, and others put in their places like so many mere logs of wood, or new piles on a pier-head; but whether this is consonant with reason or humanity, with what the divine laws are, or

what the human law should be, is quite a different matter.

Nothing could exceed the joy I felt when the news of the positive surrender was confirmed. Now I should be at leisure, in the rejoicings of victory, to look for that scoundrel, for whom I had vainly, night and morning, prowled about among the French, trying if I could not catch his scowling eye, or learn some intelligence of his movements.

Hitherto all my efforts had been in vain. Now the island of Martinique was once more a British possession. The whole of the enemy's army, or what remained of it, was to be embarked in British transports; and this embarkation I determined to witness, scarcely doubting in my own mind that then at least the villain must be seen. How it was that he had escaped still to walk upon the earth, I knew not, unless from that strong destiny which will never give over to drowning, a wretch born for the gibbet.

Now, too, we had a full opportunity of inquiring as to our mysterious opponent—the foundered seventy-four. The commander-in-chief had at once discarded the barest possibility of her being a British ship; and although the slight intelligence we could gain was of the most vague and doubtful kind, still this in its way contributed stronger and additional proofs that she was a French man-of-war bringing recruits and stores to this very island.

The terms on which Martinique had been surrendered included the entire razing of Fort Bourbon, which, after the shelter it had afforded me, I heard with extreme regret. But in those days the grass was never allowed to grow beneath the feet of naval men of any kind. At the earliest moment, the French prepared for their evacuation of our new premises. But it would have been nothing to them, if not managed a little in the *spectacle* line; and certainly nothing could have been better got up than the

departing of these veterans from the ruins they had so stoutly defended.

The British troops having been made to line the road through which they passed, they presented arms to their late enemies, to the music of our immortal anthems—"God save the King," and "Rule Britannia." In this order they defiled into the town of Fort Royal, and there laying down, in token of submission, the arms they had wielded with so much honour, the English beheld, with unconcealable emotion, these hardy warriors actually shed tears of deep sorrow as they marched in a profound silence to the shore. Here the boats of the squadron had of course been prepared. It was a beautiful, quiet day, and their embarkation took place with the greatest rapidity.

Many a mournful look from weeping eyes—many a waving handkerchief, and fervent prayers from aching hearts—saluted them on their departure, as they passed by the balconies,

which were thronged with their fair country-women. With the most eager anxiety I watched the embarkation. But Donaghue was not to be seen—the dark veil of mystery that had hitherto shrouded his villany seemed still to hang over his movements; and with a heart full of bitterness, sorrow, and disappointment, I went on board the Epaminondas.

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